Elsword Time Trouble Volume 7

Author: NZ

Illustrations: Octoman

Unofficial translation: 2nafish

Contents

0. Reversed Relationship 3
1. From Kiss 15
2. Wandering Heart 66
3. Final Battle in the Grand Cavern 107
4. Farewell to Meet Again 151
5. Back to the Ending 189

0. Reversed Relationship

Add's obsession with Eve turns him into D.

Add sighed from the hypothesis still dwelling in his head as he pushed away Eun's hand tickling his chin.

"That was a long sigh…. You don't believe me?"

"So you've played all your cards with this."

"……"

Eun frowned then backed out after hearing Add responding calmly.

Add suppressed his chaotic and dizzy mind while repeatedly closing his hand into a fist then opening it again to compose himself.

The reason Add becomes D… this was difficult to accept at once but it was somewhat understandable.

"So I guess it means if Eve was the start, then it ends with Eve as well. Kukukuk…."

"….."

Eun slightly dropped her gaze when she saw Add laughing emptily. Add shrugged then asked with a raspy voice.

"So? Is there anything else you wanted to say?"

"…..It seems you believe me but your reaction is bizarre."

"What reaction did you expect? Denial that it cannot possibly be true? Or did you want me to burst into tears in despair?"

Add smiled coldly as he gripped his fist so tightly to the point where his hand felt like shattering. The pain revived his sense of judgement.

"I believe what you said. I'll believe you. But what I must do doesn't change. I'll return and get rid of D. Then….."

"You'll steal the girl's core and go back to the past?"

Add shook his head from side to side. That was what he was planning originally but there was another way now.

"I'll steal the core of this universe's Eve. I'll apply its data to my tech to enhance the Dynamos then I'll defeat D…. I'll return to the past after that. It's perfect."

"……"

Eun blankly listened to Add's plan. She let out an empty laugh after.

"Will that really go well as you think?"

"Is there any other reason why we came to this universe?"

There was another Eve in this universe and she also possessed the core. This couldn't be a coincidence.

But Eun only smiled coldly in response.

"Boy must have not understood what I told him. I said it's boy's obsession toward the girl that leads him to ruin. So why isn't he fixing this habit of always thinking with the girl in the center?"

"Because that's the fastest way. Or is there any other way? If there was another way to defeat D then you would have either told me already or it was a failure."

Add opened his arms widely.

"You and I have failed countless times. You could say that we exhausted pretty much every other option. But this must be the first time that we used the method of escaping into another universe, am I right?"

"……"

"If D knew about this beforehand, he would have prepared a countermeasure already. The reason I'm safe right now is because this move had never been done before and wasn't something that D had expected."

Add smiled gladly when Eun gave a silent nod.

"So this method is correct."

"I cannot agree to it. I don't understand why you're concluding that there's only one way."

"Then what else is there?"

At those words, Eun pointed towards Add's pocket. She was pointing towards Memory of Time and Space inside.

But Add pointed out the flaw in her suggestion.

"Memory of Time and Space…. Yes, I'll surely become stronger if I awaken to this. Others became stronger too after all. But can you grantee that it will give me enough power to defeat D?"

"…….Boy being too smart is problematic."

"Elsword, Ara…..and Eve all awakened their Memory of Time and Space but still couldn't defeat D. I don't think the result will change even if I awakened to it."

Other El Search Party members that awakened their Memory of Time and Space weren't match for D…..So will it make any difference even if Add joined in?

"Even if there was a difference, I have no idea how to awaken this. So we're discarding this option."

Eve, Ara and Elsword all awakened theirs but Add still couldn't do it and there wasn't any grantee that he'll be able to.

It was a lottery that he haven't scratched yet….. But he had no idea how to scratch it in the first place.

"We can't rely on luck. We'll target Eve's core."

"I clearly stated that the obsession boy has towards the girl is the source of all problems. I disagree with this."

There was no reason for Add to get dragged around by Eun anymore. Add purposely made a mocking smile.

"You agreeing or disagreeing isn't important. I'm not interested. We'll do things my way from now on."

"As I thought…. I immediately get discarded."

Add stayed firm despite Eun's bitter remark.

"There's no more information I need to get out of you. Or is there any information you're still hiding from me?"

"……."

The reason Eun could half control Add's actions until now was because she was concealing information.

It was only possible because she had hidden things like D's identity, the fact Add had failed countless times and the reason Add turned into D.

But Add now obtained all the information he needed.

"Now we'll do what we need to do. I also want to get rid of D after all."

Add didn't know why D wanted to become the king ruling over time and space but it didn't matter. D wasn't someone that could be negotiated with so there was no other way but to get rid of him.

"……What happens after he's defeated is the bigger problem."

"What more problems could there be? Are you thinking that I'll threaten Ara after D is defeated? I promise that I wont."

Add made his final decision.

"Everything will be solved if D is defeated. Do you have any objections to that?"

"……That's true at least on the surface."

Eun's words had a strange nuance but Add didn't ask further.

He had finally turned the tides on this power struggle with Eun that determined who had the lead in their relationship. All Eun could do now was assist with time travel if needed.

He could now get his revenge on her for deceiving and messing with him all this time. Eun had to assist Add in order to defeat D anyways…..so she had no choice but to put up with at least a slight payback from Add.

Wasn't there a phrase 'get rid of the dog after the hunt is over'? Wait, is it 'get rid of the fox after the hunt is over' now?

Add laughed in a low voice. Eun would have already seen ahead that Add would think this way. That was why she had hidden various information until now.

"Don't do anything useless to distract me anymore. I won't take them lightly."

"…..So boy is not going to bring up any old grudges?"

Eun sharply raised her eyebrows as if she was puzzled.

"My course of action has already been decided, you messing about will only be a needless distraction. Just watch from the sidelines quietly from now on."

"I revealed this information being prepared for boy's vengeance. That he'll let out all the hatred he harbored against me all this time. Isn't this the time to let all the pent up shady desires explode?"

"…..Target who we'll raise the affection points of will be Eve."

"I'm at a position where I'll have to bark or even strip if boy tells me to. But will he really let me go with just a warning?"

As Eun shrugged, her disheveled clothing slid down slightly. Well, both sides ignoring each other and saying only what they wanted couldn't be called a conversation.

Add had no other choice so he replied.

"Stop speaking nonsense and put your clothes on properly. And don't cut me off when I'm trying to say something. It's a waste of time."

"Isn't this a time where you say I'll give you hell! Or how dare you hide this information from me all this time! then make me suffer? I revealed this preparing to go through all kinds of insults and humiliation. Isn't it time for all of boy's suppressed desires to go 'Boom!'?"

Well…. it was true that he had a lot of piled up negative feelings against Eun. But bringing up the past events just for petty vengeance wasn't Add's way of doing things. He would rather just destroy or kill if necessary.

"What will I get out of by doing that? Venting my anger out on you will just waste my time and buy your hate. It doesn't help me in any way for what's to come."

"I'm prepared to willingly take any punishment boy gives me."

"……."

What is this? Does she want him to whip her or something? When Add stared in disbelief, Eun wagged her tails.

Five tails which was less than the usual amount moved gently.

Should he tell her to stop moving her tail because it was annoying? Add was about to warn her when Eun sighed sweetly.

"Haah….. Since boy is so rough and cruel, I who's powerless have no choice but to do whatever he says. Even if that may be some odd fantasies boy had been hiding deep inside his heart, I have no choice but to follow what he says."

"……"

The reason Add couldn't answer was because he was too dumfounded. Who was it again that threw Add into the hot springs not too long ago?

But if you only looked at Eun's actions, she looked like a frail girl who got captured by a terrifying monster and was worrying about horrible things that might be done to her.

Add was staring in bewilderment when Eun dropped on the bed as if she was pushed down by something. Her belt must had been untied because her shoulders got revealed and front part of her collar widened dangerously.

Then she stared at Add miserably with a teary gaze then lowered her eyes…. This objectively made her look like a frail and innocent girl oppressed by sorrow. But subjectively, it made Add so dumfounded that he was about to pass out.

"Hey……"

"Don't do it too roughly. I understand boy's heated passion, but this bed isn't that sturdy."

He wanted to punch her. He seriously wanted to…… but wasn't Eun stronger?

Add did take the upper hand in their relationship…. But considering two of their raw strengths, Eun was much more powerful so nothing had actually changed.

Add had no idea how to react to Eun becoming half naked like this.

He couldn't hit her, she was getting on his nerves …. but she might strip even more if he was not careful.

Add sighed sincerely then shook his head. Closing his eyes or turning his head away would have been better…..but showing such startled reaction will make him get caught up in Eun's pace.

"Stop speaking nonsense and put your clothes on properly."

"I'm serious right now."

Seeing her dangerously lift the hem of her skirt and waving it made him really want to punch her. But Add kept patient as he possibly could.

All the bright skin made his vision dizzy but complaining wasn't going to solve anything.

"I said I wasn't going to bring up what happened before. And I'm not going to do something so ……"

What should he call it? Add paused because he didn't know how to say it when Eun smiled and spoke for him.

"Something so erotic."

"……."

"Doesn't that word make your heart beat fast?"

His heart was beating so much from rage that he was going to pass out from high blood pressure. No, he was about to have a stroke already.

She shouldn't have any information to control him anymore…. But she kept harassing him and was trying to keep him in control by creating a strange atmosphere like this.

There were previous cases of Eun temping and provoking Add like this and Add could have just ignored or sternly scolded her each time. If those didn't work, he could have always just attacked her.

But…..it felt a bit different this time. When Add hesitated, Eun spoke to him in a seductive voice.

"If I'm going to be punished by the boy anyways, wouldn't an erotic punishment be more fitting? I'd also like to strengthen my partnership with the boy with this chance."

"There's no such partnership."

"Boy, you don't understand how the world works at all. Relationships between man and a woman is always like this. Isn't it an eternal truth that no matter how angry a man gets, he becomes soft in front of woman's breasts?"

Eun smiled then spoke about something practical this time.

"Doing something erotic with me should also help you get a kiss from one of the El Search Party girls later."

"It hasn't even been an hour since you confessed to me that you don't know much about human emotions."

Add spoke sharply but Eun didn't pretend to listen and was just stroking the wrinkles on the bedsheet.

Light-skinned fingers moved about on the bed dizzily.

Should he just ignore her and leave the room? But Add forcefully ignored this choice. This felt so awkward that he wanted to give up but nothing would be solved by running away from here.

"Eun."

"Call my name more sweetly if possible."

Eun's request was bold but this was the time for Add to speak sincerely. He cleared his throat then spoke to Eun in a serious tone.

"I won't say that I have positive feelings towards you. I don't like your way of doing things and how you deceived me all this time makes me angry. But I don't intend to nitpick or take revenge on you because of that."

"How come?"

Eun lying down sideways on the bed with her face sunk halfway into the bedsheet asked.

"Your help will also be necessary in defeating D. That's why I won't bring up past grudges and I'll pretend they never happened if we can get rid of D."

"Burying the past isn't that easy."

"It's possible."

If Add could just achieve his goal of defeating D, he had no intention of bringing up Eun's past misdeeds. But Eun who basically almost had her chest revealed shook her head lightly.

She looked like a playful cat when she did that with her face buried in the bedsheet.

"Maybe boy can move on like that but that's not possible for me."

"What?"

"Boy might be able to say that it's just something that happened in the past and forget. But I can't do that very well. I've lived and fought for too long."

Add who was a victim was saying he's not going to make a big deal of the past…… but Eun was saying that Add shouldn't do that. Add was feeling confused when Eun stopped rubbing her cheek on the bed then got up. Her clothes got dishevelled even more because of that and her cleavage got revealed.

But Eun didn't even bother fixing her clothes and stared at Add with a strange gaze.

"Boy might be able to ease his mind like that but I can't do that. How much more embarrassing words is boy going to make a girl say?"

"……"

Add thought for a moment at these unexpected words.

Add had been cooperating with Eun so far but wasn't too fond of her. Her various harassments were annoying….and it was obvious to be suspicious of someone who orders you around while not sharing much information.

There was no way you'd be fond of someone who orders you around while sitting on top of your head.

But…. Add had never thought about how Eun felt about herself in those situations. Add not being fond of Eun was obvious, but what did Eun think about her own situation?

They had conversed many times but she had almost never revealed her inner thoughts.

"If you…."

Have a sense of guilt or guilty conscience? Add was about to instinctively say this but closed his mouth. Eun's gaze right now… this wasn't an harassment that she had done to him until now.

She was serious.

"…..If you think you've wronged me in the past then repay me by cooperating with me from now on. That should be fine."

"Like I said, that kind of conclusion is only considering boy's perspective."

The one who should be giving the punishment, the one who should be taking revenge was saying he was just going to let things slide but the perpetrator was demanding that she couldn't accept this.

"What I mean is, there needs to be something to tie things up for us. To shake off all the negative feelings and fight together."

"….."

This stupid seduction was for that sake? She wasn't provoking him?

Eun flapped her collar when Add stared dumbfounded.

But Add didn't turn away his gaze this time. He clicked his tongue instead and spoke as if telling Eun to listen up.

"What a stupid fox……"

"I may not look it but I'm…."

"That wasn't even a seduction. How useless."

Eun frowned when Add spoke sharply. But Add's next words were faster than Eun's response.

"I can't trust you in the first place so doing something like this will just make me think you have something else up your sleeves. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"It's normal for men to jump in without second thoughts when they see women's breasts."

"That's something only mindless beasts do."

Well Add didn't know what other men were like and he wasn't interested. What's important right now was his method.

"Stop trying to gloss this over with something stupid like this. It's not like I'm going to trust you even if you do this, and what you've done won't be erased. I said I won't make an issue of it, I didn't say I'll forget about everything."

"That's why….."

"So if you have any sense of guilt or aching conscience about what you've done……"

He had never imagined Eun possessed such emotions but if it was true, then there needed to be something to tie this all up.

"So cooperate properly with me until the end."

"That's why…."

"I have the upper hand now so why are you keep doing something that I didn't even ask of you? Not only that but you even threw an injured person into the hot springs, you're keep making me say tiresome things."

Talking with her won't get anywhere. Add boldly approached the bed then sat.

Eun seemed slightly surprised but Add didn't pay attention to her as he lay down putting his head on her tail.

"Your tail is useful at least. I'll use it as a pillow from time to time."

"What?"

"This is my first demand. I'm tired so I'm going to sleep for a bit."

Add said this and closed his eyes.

Well, if Eun really had a guilty conscience from what she did to Add in the past then there needed to be some gesture of reconciliation. Add could also accept it if it's just borrowing her tail.

Also, it was comfortable when he slept on it before.

"Sigh……"

Add could hear Eun's sigh but he ignored by pretending he was asleep. Then other tails moved to cover Add's body.

"Boy is also too soft-hearted."

Add wanted to refute her but he was asleep right now, let's ignore her. Eun didn't say anything more when Add didn't answer.

Add who was covered by tails internally sighed in relief then started to make plans for his future actions.

Problem with Eun was roughly resolved. Only Eve's core and getting a kiss from the El Search Party remained. He should also defeat Scar while at it.

There were various issues but he just had to solve them one by one. Add was coming up with an order to solve these issues but then became startled when he started to get sleepy. He gave up resisting sleep soon after.

He wasn't fully healed yet…..and the real fight started tomorrow when the other members arrived. It was a reasonable choice to sleep in order to prepare for tomorrow.

Also

Her tails were warm.

1. Starting from Kiss

The El Search Party group that headed to the Temple of Fire arrived at the Hot Springs. Add heard that the members who just arrived went to bathe to relieve their fatigue so he made up his mind as he also headed to the men's bath.

He didn't like bathing with other people but he needed information.

When Add arrived, Raven, Elsword, Ciel and Chung were already inside the water enjoying their bath. Elsword waved his hand to greet Add.

"Big Brother Add, was everything fine on this side?"

"……."

'Lu and Rena had a big fight and Elesis and I got captured' was too long of an explanation.

"Listen to what happened on our side from the others. How did things go on your side?"

"Didn't Ms.Ignia come before us?"

"…..I haven't talked properly with that priestess yet."

Add couldn't make the time to talk with Ignia because the information Eun revealed was too shocking. Raven explained simply.

"There were demons lying in ambush. It took some time to defeat them."

"Didn't Lu cause trouble?"

Add shrugged when Ciel asked amiably. The reason Add came to the men's bath wasn't to give trifling explanations.

"Things seems to be complicated amongst girls. It's difficult for me to explain."

"…….It must be."

Raven must have guessed what might have happened because he sighed. He must also understand Rena's feelings.

Anyways, the main topic starts from here. Add nervously looked at the other guys then carefully brought up the topic.

"I have something I want to ask. But I first want a promise from all of you that you'll keep this a secret from the girls."

"What?"

"Secret?"

Chung asked confusedly and Ciel stared at Add with a strange gaze for a moment then made a mischievous smile.

"Interesting. I'll keep it a secret."

"Is it something you can't tell them? What is it?

"If it's just consulting……"

Elsword and Raven seem to have accepted as well. Add gulped then…..warned again.

"I'll say it again, if you don't keep this a secret….."

"There must be a girl that's on your mind, who is it?"

Add shut his mouth when Ciel asked while smiling. He wanted to deny Ciel's words so strongly but he didn't know if denying right now would help with the conversation that will follow.

"Let me first say that this doesn't concern this universe."

"Alright, so?"

Add became wary when Ciel unexpectedly showed strong interest in this topic.

Come to think of it, Add didn't have any information on Ciel unlike the other search party members. You could conclude others were just generally naive despite this being different universe versions, but there was no precedent information about Lu and Ciel.

But to catch a tiger, you must go into the tiger's den.

"…….I'll be straightforward. Have any of you ever kissed a girl?"

"Hmm?"

"K-kiss?"

Elsword and Chung's eyes widened and Raven and Ciel had no responses.

Attitudes of two men keeping their silence strangely contrasted each other. Raven had an impression as if he was reluctant about this topic while Ciel looked like he was trying to prevent himself from bursting into laughter.

It will look lame if Add withdrew the topic now that he started it.

"There's someone I have to kiss. But I don't know how I should do that. If any of you have experience with it, I'd like to hear about your experience or any other information regarding it…."

"……."

Add trailed his words because he got troubled from the stares of the guys.

"…..I know it's strange to ask something like this."

"N-no. I, it's not strange at….all."

Ciel was covering his mouth with his hands and shivering. Add became annoyed when they made eye contact because Ciel was looking at him with a strangely understanding gaze.

Add ignored Ciel then looked around at the other three.

"……What does that mean?"

"Hmm……"

Elsword was making a face as if he was bewildered and Chung was embarrassed with his face all red. Two of them didn't seem like they'd be much of a help.

Raven had his head turned away with his mouth shut. It seemed like he was going to spare his words much as possible……and Add didn't have intentions to pressure him to talk.

"Pfft, pfft."

The problem was…. only one remaining after the elimination rule was Ciel who was currently struggling not to laugh.

When Add looked back at Ciel with a reluctant gaze, Ciel covered his mouth with his hands then turned away.

"Don't laugh at me……"

"I-I'm not…… ah."

Ciel was shaking trying not to laugh. Add felt like hitting his bare exposed back.

The reason for Add's face becoming red probably wasn't only because of heat from the hot spring.

"…..I'm asking seriously."

"Hmm….."

Elsword must have realized this wasn't a joke and groaned troublesomely then spoke.

"Want me to ask Big Sis about it for you?"

"……..Don't do it ever. I already said this is a secret from the girls. I won't forgive you if you do."

Elsword scratched his head troublesomely when Add glared at him.

"But isn't that something boy and girl does together? Wouldn't it be better to ask what girls think about it?"

That was a rather mature(?) opinion coming from Elsword but Add shook his head. Add did say this was about his universe but that was just an excuse. This was something that had to be done in this universe in order for him to go back to the original universe.

It was an information that shouldn't be revealed to the girls of the Search Party. He wanted to keep it a secret much as possible.

"I'm sorry Mr.Add. I don't think I'll be much help."

"I didn't expect much from you….."

Chung made a complicated expression at Add's sharp response. Raven was still keeping silent and Ciel was struggling to hold in his laugh.

"……"

Add anticipated only ones amongst the El Search Party that likely had this kind of experience was Raven and Ciel who were older.

But Raven's atmosphere was as if he didn't want to talk and Ciel was…..

"Pfft, hahahaha….."

Going to die from laughing too much. Add internally wished he really did drop dead right now.

"I was skeptic but you guys can't help me after all. Let's stop talking about this. Remember, don't….."

"Ah, wait Add. Pfft, hahaha….."

Ciel waved his hands to stop Add. It was annoying how he burst out into laughter in middle of his words but Add decided to listen to what he had to say for now.

"Alright, so do you mean there's a girl who's on your mind in your universe? Who is it?"

"Do I have to reveal that?"

"I can't give you any advices if I don't know who."

Add didn't answer right away to Ciel who finally stopped laughing, no, who was still laughing but stopped laughing out loud.

Who will he kiss?

"……."

Although Add stalled for time by keeping silent, he couldn't come up with a quick answer to this question. Add had asked the male party members because he thought it might be a good reference if he heard about their experience.

This had been originally for gathering information. But Add couldn't ignore Ciel's suggestion.

"I see, so it changes depending on who."

Eun did also say something similar while mentioning about affection points. Add delved into his thoughts while stroking his chin. So far, he had blindly thought that he was going to raise the affection point of someone…. But that was too vague.

It needed to be more thorough.

"I see, that's right."

Ciel was watching with an excited gaze as Add delved into his thoughts. Although Ciel was being annoying, he was the only consultant right now.

"You said Lu and I weren't there so that leaves the girls except Lu….. Is it one of Aisha, Rena, Eve, Elesis or Ara?"

Chung stared straightly at Add when the names of the girls were mentioned. Elsword stared piercingly at Add when Elesis was mentioned.

And Raven was just staring at him quietly.

Add became nervous when gazes of three naked(because this was a bath) males focused on him. Three of them didn't say anything…..but were giving off a strange pressure.

The atmosphere was as if there might be trouble if Add said something wrong.

"Big Brother, you can't possibly be……"

Elsword stopped in middle of his words then scratched his head. Elsword was groaning as if he couldn't organize his thoughts then glared at Add.

"Thinking about Big Sis right?"

"……You think I'm that suicidal?"

He'd be glad if he didn't lose a limb or two after kissing her. Add wasn't putting Elesis in the list of candidates in the first place.

Just dealing with her was bothersome enough, so buying her affection? Ridiculous.

Add answered from detest at the idea but Elsword didn't seem like he was listening.

"I don't want to meddle…..but you have to beat me first if you want to do it with Big Sis."

"……."

Elsword was acting like he would have pulled out his sword if they weren't in a bath. Add was so bewildered that he retorted.

"Do you think I'm crazy? Why would I make approaches to that girl? Stop speaking nonsense….."

What do you call these kinds of guys again? Sister complex? But Elsword calmly expressed his opinion despite Add's annoyed response.

"I won't accept anyone who's weaker than Big Sis. Fight me first."

"….."

Is he saying if anyone wants to kiss Elesis, they must beat him first? How does that process come about? If you want to kiss the older sister, you must fight and beat her younger brother? What universe is that culture from?

"Drop it. Didn't I say clearly that it wasn't Elesis?"

"Then who is it, Mr.Add?"

Add closed his mouth at Chung's question. This whole situation felt like he fastened the first button of a coat wrong. Add hasn't been wary of the other members because he was focusing only on his own problems, but…..

'Wait…. So male members here are mindful about female members as well?'

Hypothesis that Add hadn't even thought about before passed through his mind.

Elsword cares about Elesis. Although Elsword's reaction was over the top, this was understandable since they were siblings….. But others too?

"……"

It felt like he carelessly touched upon complicatedly tangled feelings and relationships of the Search Party. When Add wasn't saying anything, Raven who had been keeping silent all this time opened his mouth.

"It's about something from that universe, so it's not something we should meddle in."

"……I know. But you can't do it with Big Sis. I won't accept anyone who's weaker than Big Sis."

Just by what authority did he have the right to say something like that…….? Also, saying that he won't accept any man who was weaker than Elesis was not too different from saying he was going let his sister be single forever.

"I also think that's a bit….."

"So, Add. Who's the girl you're concerned about?"

Ciel, the culprit who inflated this issue asked again without hiding how much he was enjoying this. Add who was feeling cornered rolled his eyes about while looking for a way to answer. He then stood up quickly.

This calls for a tactical retreat.

"I wasn't thinking right. This conversation doesn't seem too useful so let's stop here."

Gazes of the male members followed him but Add ignored and quickly escaped from the bath. This was running away even thinking subjectively, but he had no choice but to escape in this situation.

Hot springs lounge, it was a place located between men and women's bath.

Add sat down on a chair in the empty lounge then sighed in relief. It felt like he was freed from a pressure.

"Phew, this is giving me a headache. Seriously……"

Add, with his face red from getting out of the hot springs organized his thoughts while drinking a bottle of water. He was retracing the events just now to figure out how this error, this awkward atmosphere came about…..

"So the El Search Party that I was in was just Eve, Elsword, me, Rena and Ara….."

Chung did join later too. Anyways, the other El Search Party's relationships had been rather straightforward.

For an easy comparison, you could say Rena was the eldest sister who embraced everyone kindly, the youngest kid was Elsword, Eve was the brainy second sister, Ara was the clumsy third sister, and Add himself…..was the rebellious eldest brother who didn't like how things were going in the household.

"……."

Eldest brother? It was funny even though Add was the one who thought of it. Add pressed on his forehead then sighed.

Anyways, although this kind of relationship existed….. Add had never thought about relationships amongst the old group. Making Eve turn to look at him was…..how should he describe it? It was because a cat that he was fond of was not even giving him a single glance and was always playing with some strange red haired kid.

"So that means…."

But circumstances must be different in this universe with this El Search Party. First of all, 9 of them had gathered and even Lu and Ciel joined so their relationships must be a bit different than the other universe.

No, he won't be able to arrive at the core detail if he merely said relationships.

Let's say love relationships.

"……"

Although the word felt a bit reluctant, Add couldn't deny that it was a correct expression. People with different circumstances and personalities have gathered so it would be stranger if things had progressed per Add's previous knowledge.

Add had to think of this El Search Party as a similar but different group than the El Search Party that he had known…..

"No……"

Add might have been just unaware and maybe there had been some strange atmosphere between males and females in the 5-member El Search Party too. Add shook his head when things became even more complicated as he thought.

"This is driving me crazy….."

He had planned to ask the male members first to obtain knowledge and information but it felt like he ended up unnecessarily touching upon something he shouldn't have.

"Not only that, but I have to do it with someone from this universe to go back……"

If Add tried to kiss this universe's Elesis, Elsword will come to attack him with his sword drawn. Not only that, but similar problem could happen with the other girls as well.

"What should I do?"

Figuring out a way to defeat D and stealing Eve's core was already a handful, but did he really have to worry about love relationships that he had never been interested in all his life?

Add was letting out heavy sighs when he heard a voice from behind him.

"Mr.Add?"

A familiar voice, Add looked back to see Ara with her eyes wide open.

"Do you have something you're worried about?"

"Mind your own business."

Ara didn't mind Add's cold reply and sat beside him. Wondering why Ara was acting like this, Add took a brief glance at her but she just had her mouth shut and was looking forward.

She must have been in the bath just now because her skin was dyed red.

"Umm…. Would you mind if I asked one question?"

"Don't ask."

Ara was hesitant but nodded. She was looking at her own feet with a gloomy air about her…..but it didn't seem like she was going to get up and leave.

Add frowned then changed his words.

"Just say it if you're going to act depressed beside me. Although I won't promise that I'll answer."

Ara's expression turned bright at the approval then she asked.

"Me in your universe…… Was I successful in turning Elder Brother Aren back into a human?"

"……Ran huh."

Add's universe and this universe were different yet similar.

It seems the fact that Ara's older brother became a demon, and that Ara was fighting to turn Ran back into a human was the same.

"Why do you want to know that? Whether you turned Ran back or not in my universe doesn't have anything to do with you."

"……That's true."

Ara acknowledged quietly then sighed. Her appearance was that of a beautiful girl drenched in sorrow when she was keeping quiet.

Add who was staring at Ara's face realized he was making observations he hadn't done before in his life so he abruptly turned his gaze away while making fake coughs.

"I said this already but my universe is currently being ruled by D. Ran also works under D so he's enemy of the El Search Party. If I find a way to defeat D and go back…..then maybe a way to turn my universe's Ran back into a human might open."

"Really? I'm very glad!"

Ara's expression turned bright suddenly as she clapped. How her expression changed drastically from a depressed sigh into a smile was reminiscent of a flower blooming. When Add stared at her, Ara got surprised from Add's gaze then covered her mouth.

After a while, Ara slowly confessed her thoughts.

"Just like Mr.Add said, even if Elder Brother Aren returned to normal in that universe….it doesn't have anything to do with me. But I'll still be happy if that happened."

"Why?"

"Because it means that there's a possibility that I can turn Elder Brother here back to normal."

Ara spoke while staring at her feet.

"Ms.Aisha explained it to me. Parallel universes are worlds of possibilities, that they are places with all possible events that could happen. If Elder Brother Aren returned to normal in Mr.Add's universe, wouldn't that mean that there's a possibility that it could happen in this universe as well?"

"You're speaking nonsense……."

Add cut her off abruptly.

"The theory that parallel universes are portions of possibilities is correct but it encompasses an immensely large range. It's actually just a wordplay. Even universe where Elsword is a girl or universes where Rena is a man can theoretically exist. According to probabilities anyways."

"Really? Mr.Elsword is a girl?"

"……"

Add kept quiet from being awestruck when Ara opened her eyes widely in surprise. But Ara must have interpreted the silence in a positive way because she made a very curious expression.

"Mr.Elsword would be very cute if he was a girl. How is she like? I want to see her too. Of course, he's cute right now too."

"Don't change the topic in a weird direction. It's annoying."

"Ah, sorry. Did I act too excited?"

At Add's words, Ara meekly lowered her gaze then apologized. It felt like watching a puppy that had been energetically moving around its owner then become saddened after being scolded.

It was difficult to ignore.

"I don't know in detail about relationship between you and Ran in here…..but I can only say something irresponsible like try your best. It might work out if you try. I'm also willing to help you long as it doesn't get in the way of my objectives. "

"Thank you! But Elder Brother Aren is….."

"I'm not saying this emptily. You did….."

Recalling the past events, Ara did help Add out in various ways. In their first battle with Elesis, Ara believed in Add's plan and bravely threw herself into the danger zone.

Come to think of it now, Ara who was in charge of the front line was Add's most trustworthy chess piece. Precious chess piece that followed his order without a question no matter how strange the order was.

He had never thanked her…..but come to think of it now, she was a very important individual.

"You did help me out in various ways after all."

"I did?"

Ara obviously couldn't comprehend but Add didn't explain further. Add was confident that he knew better than anyone about feeling of wanting to get back the person precious to you.

Just like he helped Elsword who was trying to get Elesis back, there was no reason why he couldn't help Ara who was trying to get Aren back.

"I have to return soon as possible but tell me if you need help with anything during that time. You don't even have the brains to think after all."

Add's tone ended up becoming like how he treated Ara that he knew. But Ara nodded innocently without complaints.

"Yes, I'll ask right away if I have anything I'm curious about."

"……."

So this Ara was also naive in the end. Her actions were sharper and she had a strangely darker air about her but how she was a well-mannered and innocent girl was still the same.

If you were to compare her to an animal, she'd be more like a dog or something else in the dog family. She trusts people easily and it feels like she'd readily follow you while wagging her tail if you just said couple nice things to her.

"Well, fox is also in the dog family….."

"What do you mean?"

Add just waved his hand up and down in response when Ara tilted her head at what Add said to himself. Then Ara's gaze followed the hand's movement as she nodded quietly. This was rather cute so Add unknowingly waved his hand repeatedly then Ara's gaze kept following his hand without saying a word.

"……"

He had never thought about this before…but isn't Ara way too easy to handle? Add who was staring at Ara with his hand on his cheek tried applying this thought while still half in doubt.

"Hand."

"?"

"Hand."

When Add spoke two times in a row, Ara tilted her head while politely holding out both of her hands forwards. She looked like a kid getting her hands examined.

…..She really held them out? Add was bewildered but still moved on to the next experiment.

"Try doing a backflip."

"Okay."

Without asking why, Ara stood to lightly kick up on the ground and spun around in midair once then landed. After performing a magnificent backflip, Ara stared at Add without saying a word.

Like a puppy waiting for her next order.

"……."

Add wanted to deny the comparison that he made in his head but he was already concluding…… Ara was way too nice of a person. No, saying that she was a nice person was a bit different than this.

"What should I do next Mr.Add?"

"Sit."

Ara immediately sat beside Add again. Add chuckled at Ara's attitude that looked like she was waiting for his next words.

Ara was dog-type. She obediently carries out orders she's given and leaves question about the order for later. Add did know she had this kind of tendency before but…..

Add was thinking when Ara suddenly pushed her face closer to him. Add got surprised from the sudden lack of distance that he lost his balance while trying to back up.

Add was about to fall when Ara hastily grabbed his arm.

"Watch out Mr.Add."

"…..T-thanks."

Add was in an awkward position where he was half fallen on the ground. But Ara didn't let Add up right away and asked carefully.

"Mr.Add, do you have something you're worried about after all?"

"What?"

"Didn't Mr.Add say you'll help me? I also want to help Mr.Add."

"First….."

Add was about to say let go of his arm first but froze from the thought that came up in his mind. Ara's determined gaze, her exquisite facial features.

And her red lips.

"……"

Dog-type, she holds out her hands if you ask for them. She doesn't demand an explanation for orders she's given. Not only that, but according to Eun, she's the easiest candidate.

What will happen if he asked her for a kiss?

Add felt a strange reluctance at his own thought but his brain was running logically.

Biologically speaking, something like a kiss was just a simple membrane contact. Others seems to be all worked up over something this insignificant and applying various emotions to the act….. But Add who was an engineer could coldly conclude that it was just a simple membrane contact.

I need a kiss in order to go back, please do it with me. How would Ara react if he said this? She'll obviously be embarrassed….but wouldn't she agree if he spoke his words right?

"……Mr.Add?"

Add who was deep in thought while looking at Ara's pretty lips came to his senses when Ara called him. But he still didn't know what to say. Should he ask her to let go of his arm? Or……

Add was thinking while staring straightly at Ara but then turned around from feeling a strange presence.

Icy gaze, Eve had appeared before anyone had realized and was staring coldly at Add and Ara who was holding onto his arm.

Add really didn't know what to say.

Eve approached slowly as Add stayed frozen. Let's hope that her gaze being frostier than usual is just an imagination.

"Don't do something weird in a public lounge, useless."

"That's not it Ms.Eve. Mr.Add was about to fall so I caught him."

Eve tried to push Add down after hearing Ara's explanation. Add staggered but barely managed to not fall and stood up right after.

"You could have just fell down, useless."

When Add didn't answer and fixed his crumpled clothes, Eve's gaze became even colder.

"You could have just stayed rolling on the floor, useless."

"What's wrong Ms.Eve?"

Ara asked carefully because the air felt was like Eve was angry at Add.

"I'll explain it to you later so return to your room. I have something to talk about with this man who should have been better off rolling on the floor."

"…….Can I?"

Ara asked carefully after looking at Add. It seemed Ara could at least read that this situation was serious. Add nodded silently.

"Then…. two of you have a nice talk."

Ara reluctantly left the lounge. Soon as Ara left, Eve glared at Add while expulsing an icy aura. She seemed more even more offended compared to when Add had first arrived in Lanox.

"I won't forgive you do something indecent to Ara."

"What?"

Eve spoke sharply with an icy voice.

"Ara opens her heart to anyone and treats them kindly. I won't forgive anyone who disrespects her good will."

"….."

Were those words something that Eve should say? When Add was taken aback and stared back crookedly, Eve stretched her arm out as if there was no point in talking anymore. Then Oberon and Ophelia were summoned immediately.

Add laughed emptily at Eve's gesture of resorting to display of force.

"You must be acting like this because you saw what I did just now. That was just a light experiment. Why are you so upset?"

"My comrade was insulted. I can't let this slide."

Well, Eve that Add knew could have acted like this as well. Both Eves were somewhat alike so her showing this kind of reaction was understandable.

"Comrades….? Since when were you so close with Ara?"

"Don't judge me by your standards."

Eve was treating Add with a tone as if she was disgusted with just having to talk to Add. It seemed Eve became very upset after seeing Add train(?) Ara.

Was the observation that Eve's reaction was like 'how dare you try to mess with our puppy!' a bit twisted?

"Kukukuk, so…. Seeing me play with Ara a little upset you that much?"

Add asked while sneering because Eve's words were unexpected for him. Eve sighed then folded her arms. Then Oberon and Ophelia disappeared through the dimension gate.

She must have realized she got too riled up.

"Ara tends to be fooled easily by others. I especially don't want her to be involved with a useless man like you that only tries to comes up with petty schemes. If you want to speak with Ara from now on, then you'll have to speak through me."

"……"

Why was she being so overprotective? This was a bit surprising so Add continued the conversation to get more information out of this.

"Are you saying I should speak everything through you if I want to talk with Ara? Isn't that a bit over the top?"

"This rule will stand until I determine that you won't insult Ara anymore."

"……."

That's right. Come to think of it, Eve was the second sister and Ara was the youngest sister.

So should he think of this as the second sister being protective of her naïve younger sister and trying to keep an eye on anyone that might harm her?

Add went over the relationship chart in his head then acknowledged Eve's actions. But he still asked with a thought of what else he could find out.

"Why? What did I do? I just lightly consulted with her. I did play a little joke at the end but this shouldn't be anything you should get so worked up over."

Eve must have not expected this question because she hesitated for a bit then spoke slowly.

"…..I felt something very indecent from how you treated Ara. Although I'm not exactly sure what it was."

"…….."

She was right on the mark. To think Nasods could be this sharp.

Add was in shock and admiration at Eve's superior senses but Eve must have interpreted that as Add being suspicious. Eve made an unpleasant expression.

"Anyways, it will be like I said for a while. I'll also tell Ara to not to talk with you alone. If you do not comply with this, I'll speak about this to Elesis."

"……"

Totally forceful and even with an added threat. But her instinct was right on the mark.

Add was taken aback at this turn of events but was keeping quiet for now. Eve was very furious right now so saying something to retort back will only fuel her anger.

Of course, Eve will never admit that she was being angry right now.

When Add kept silent, Eve must have determined that Add understood and turned around to leave. That was the moment Add was aiming for.

Time to go on the offensive during the moment when she thinks everything is finished.

"Eve."

Eve who was about to walk away glanced back. Add issued a challenge while Eve still had a confused and loosened expression.

"What do you think a kiss is?"

"……."

Eve thought for a moment then answered confidently.

"Isn't that just a membrane contact? Why do you ask?"

"……Kukukuk, never mind. It's fine."

Add shrugged as if it was nothing then Eve walked away. Add withdrew his smile after Eve disappeared from his view.

"To think our views would align in this matter….."

Well, Add was a Nasod engineer and Eve was a Nasod. Two of their thoughts and point of views were similar. Of course, Eve had the tendency to distance herself from Add…. But you couldn't deny that two of them had similar point of views.

"I'll first organize all the information I got."

Let's head back.

Add saw someone unfamiliar as he was returning to his lodge. Red hair, but it didn't belong to Elsword or Elesis.

The one who was holding a spear and looking far out towards the volcano was Ignia.

"If I'm correct she was… priestess of fire."

Add never heard about Ignia in his universe so he had no information on her. But he did know from experience that Ignia was very powerful. Ignia must have sensed someone was nearby so she turned around. Then she waved her hand towards Add.

"Ooh. Nice to see you!"

Ignia gave a weird greeting then approached quickly as she cut to the chase.

"You, is it true that you came over from a different universe? Elesis said so."

"What do you want?"

Elesis must have determined that this wasn't an information that needed to be hidden. Well, a lax group like the El Search party couldn't possibly understand the concept of controlling and hiding information.

Although Eun was a very special case.

"Ah, not much…. I'm Priestess of Fire, Ignia. Did I have to explain that? I have something I want to ask you…. you saw me in your universe too right?"

"No, this is my first time seeing you."

Ignia asked brightly but her expression turned stiff when she heard Add's answer. She asked again reluctantly.

"Could it be….. that I died on that side?"

That was a miss. Add spoke while frowning.

"This is the first time I heard about a priestess. I've never heard about a priestess or have been to a village called Lanox where I came from."

"So I wasn't even there?"

"It's not like all conditions are same between parallel universes. It's not a big deal if you didn't exist on our side."

At Add's answer, Ignia let out a huge sigh then crouched down and sighed again. She looked totally let down so Add just passed by her.

……But he couldn't walk forward. Ignia who was crouching down had grabbed Add's sleeve.

"Wait, here I am being really depressed and you're going to ignore me and go on your way?"

"I don't know the information you want."

Despite being a girl with the power to incinerate hundreds of demons…..the tone of her voice was light. So she wasn't asking how herself from another universe was doing out of curiosity like Ara?

At Add's answer, Ignia made a very displeased face then forcefully dragged Add down.

She was unexpectedly strong so Add ended up being dragged down and hitting his bottom on the floor. Add got annoyed at how he was sitting on the floor…..but Ignia protested as she glared at Add.

"If someone is having a hard time like this then it's a common courtesy to stay beside and protect their side! How dare you try to ignore me."

"….."

It seemed she was talking about something but Add couldn't understand. Add even forgot being angry and made a blank expression from the words that he was trying to translate in his head.

But Ignia restlessly spewed out words at Add.

"Do you even know how much I looked forward to meeting you ever since I heard that you came from a different universe? Do you think I arrived a day earlier for no reason? It was to meet you! But I got scared to confirm things from you so it took an entire day until I made up my mind. So how dare you try to end this with just couple words? Also, didn't I appear and help you guys? Of course, I would have eradicated all the demons regardless but I think I'm in a position where I deserve some thanks from you. So me, who helped you is really depressed right now but rather than worry about me and asking what's wrong, you try to ignore me instead? Just what's wrong with you? You're not popular, right? Do you not know anything about girl's feelings?"

"……."

I can't understand what you're saying in the first place. While thinking this, Add listened to the rain of complaints coming at him with a blank expression then barely managed to catch some words that he could understand.

"…..Yes, you appearing and cleaning up all the demons was very nice. Thanks for that."

"Are you trying to end this by just saying that? Then what about my heart that was beating so much before I met you? Do you think you can get away by just saying you don't know anything?"

Add got startled unlike himself when Ignia glared at him with sizzling gaze.

"……I-I'm sorry."

"Do you think it will all end with just an apology? Maybe they let you get away with that in your universe but it's different here."

Just what do you want from me then? Add couldn't understand why Ignia was so angry at him so he just kept his mouth shut. It didn't look like this girl will let him go….and he didn't have enough strength to escape from her grasp so having her let all her emotions out felt like the correct response.

When Add kept silent, Ignia who was fuming with anger looked like she calmed down then steadied her breath.

Ignia got up by stabbing her spear on the ground and leaning on it. She sighed as she brushed her bang to the side then held out her hand towards Add.

"Sorry, I said too much because I got too worked up."

"……"

It might not be over. When Add silently grabbed her hand to stand up, Ignia leered at him.

"But you're also at fault. Do you realize how shocked I was when I heard that I don't exist in your universe? Shouldn't you say something like that more carefully?"

"Is that really something you should be so shocked about?"

"What?"

Ignia stared at Add in disbelief as if trying to say 'how can such a person exist? Is he even a human?'. She looked quite appalled so Add traced back on what he said to check if he really did say something wrong.

Ignia withdrew her appalled gaze then spoke. Her tone was calm unlike before.

"…..Ah, yes. If you came here from the other side, then you wouldn't know how things are going in here. Thing aren't going too well in this universe."

"I heard about it roughly. Elves are about to go extinct, there's dragon as our enemy and Velder Kingdom was destroyed."

"Yes….but it seems you didn't hear that all the priestesses except me are dead."

The word priestesses felt fresh for Add. No, it seems he did hear it somewhere….. Add was rummaging over his memories when Ignia spoke depressingly.

"All the other priestesses were killed by the demons. Even those two kids that I promised to protect….."

Ignia's eyes were filled to the brim with tears as she spoke. She wiped her eyes then bit her lower lips as she tried to collect her emotion.

"I know that those kids won't come back. But I had a thought that if an alternate universe existed, maybe they might be living happily in there…..I thought that would be really nice….."

"……They must have been important to you."

Ignia gave a small nod.

"Of course, I know that confirming something like this doesn't have any meaning. I couldn't protect them in the end. Still…. I ended up thinking how nice it would be if there was a universe where those kids were safe."

"……."

Add also knew what she meant. That's right, Add jumped over time for the possibility of protecting someone precious to him, possibility of getting back someone precious to him.

But time travel wasn't something that others could use.

You can't ever meet people that have been lost or dead again. That's the cruel rule of the world.

Add didn't say anything as he looked at Ignia sorrowfully lower her gaze.

Add chose the path of jumping over time but telling others to do the same was impossible. If there was still a possibility of protecting the ones important to them, and possibility that it could be achieved, then Add can encourage them and even lend his help.

He could help Ara with turning Ran back.

But Ignia had already lost people that were important to her. What words from him could possibly hold any meaning for her?

As Add was thinking, a single line of thought flashed by in his head. His mouth spoke faster than his head could organize this thought.

"Legend of the water priestess."

"……What?"

"Legend of the water priestess, story….about a priestess who fell in love with a demon."

Add became shocked at this information that he just remembered. This was a story he heard from Chung back in Hamel. Add hadn't been interested in it back then but its significance changes now that he's face to face with Ignia, the priestess of fire.

"It's a legend that has been passed down in my universe. I thought that it was just a simple legend……"

"There's a priestess?"

Ignia's mood changed then she asked while pushing her face closer to Add almost as if she was going to grab him by the collar. But Add responded level-headedly.

"It's a legend from hundreds of years ago. But from your reaction, priestess of water did seem to exist."

"……Yes, Hamel's Sasha."

There was no proof that the water priestess from the legend and this universe's water priestess were same individuals. But there was a high chance that they were indeed the same.

"I didn't mention in detail about what's happening in my universe to others. Keep what I'm about to say from now on only a secret between us."

"……."

Ignia looked at Add with eyes filled with anticipation as she nodded. Well, she didn't look that trustworthy to keep a secret but it wouldn't be a big deal for Add if this detail was leaked anyways.

"I think the time has been distorted in my universe."

"What does that mean?"

"I don't know in detail either. But there's someone called D trying to rule over time and space and time is being distorted during the process. Things that shouldn't be happening are happening."

Add from present and future existing at the same time was something that should normally be impossible.

'Eun also spoke about this as if D was cheating, breaking the rules.'

Add recalled the wooden lattice board that Eun showed him, a stone on top of another stone then nodded strongly. D was existing in a form that shouldn't be possible and was bending the world to his will.

And the order of time has been distorted in that process.

"So because of D's work, water priestess might have changed into a person from hundreds of years ago and is being passed down as a legend."

"Then….."

"If I defeat D, then the priestesses might return to the present."

No, it will certainly happen. D who rules over time was trying to obtain space that Aisha had been controlling to become the king of time and space…… But what will happen if Add defeats D?

There will be a vacancy for the throne. Not just any throne but the throne of king of time, a position of enormous power.

Then who should take up that empty position? Shouldn't it obviously be the winner?

Add gripped his fist tightly at this thought surging up from within him.

"If I…… defeat D. Then everything will be solved."

He'll become the king of time after D. He'll obtain the power to go back to the past freely….. then he'll get back the person that was precious to him.

Defeating D was same as achieving his goal. These two shouldn't be thought separately.

Add became assured that he had to defeat D not because of others, not because Eun said Add was the only one who could defeat D…..but to achieve his ultimate goal.

There was no detailed explanation but Ignia seemed like she understood.

"I see, so in that universe…..there's still a chance that Gloria and Darkmoon can be happy?"

"Well, if I go back and achieve my goal…. Then I could consider it."

He could consider doing it as a favor for Ignia to commemorate his goal becoming clearer. Ignia bowed when Add spoke slowly.

"Yes, I'll be counting on you. Although it will be impossible in this universe…. But please protect them so those kids can be happy on that side."

"……I'll do that."

"Thanks….."

Gloria, Darkmoon. They were names that Add haven't heard before but he could sense that they had been very dear to Ignia.

When Add accepted readily, Ignia made an expression as if she was relieved then leaned her spear on her shoulder.

"I won't be able to help directly with what's going on in your universe but tell me if there's anything I can do to help you. I'll do my best."

"Kukukuk. That's….."

Add was about to say he'll tell her later when he thinks of something but paused.

The condition Eun spoke about was to kiss with someone from the El Search Party, but did Ignia count as an El Search Party?

"….What I'm about to say is an absolute secret. I'll cancel what we talked about before if you tell this to anyone."

"Don't worry. I'm good at keeping secrets. So what can I help you with?"

Ignia replied with an extremely willing expression. She would have rolled up her sleeves if the design of her clothes allowed her to.

Add explained the situation slowly while wishing this didn't sound weird.

"For me to go back to my universe….. I need to kiss one of the girls from the El Search Party."

"What?"

"Don't doubt me. I'm not joking."

Add ignored Ignia's confused reaction then continued speaking.

Well, it sounded as if he could also do it with a guy but omitting that….

"I don't want to do it either. But there's no other way. But I…..haven't done that kind of thing before. I don't even know where to begin."

"……Uh, so are you asking me to do it with you?"

Add shook his head when Ignia got startled.

"With El Search Party from my universe. So, I have to do it with someone except Lu and you."

"Hmm….."

Ignia didn't seem convinced because she scratched her head. It would be weird if she easily believed that a way for Add to return to his original universe was a kiss. It was as if a story about science fiction had suddenly turned into a story about magic and fairy tales.

Ignia repeatedly tapped the ground with the tail of her spear as she asked.

"Let's say I believe you, so how can I help?"

"This isn't something many people should know about. That will only make things more complicated and troublesome since there should be some established….personal relationships between the Search Party members as well. So I want to figure this out quietly as possible."

"Ah, of course. There's probably something like that."

That's right. He needed an informant.

Eun was still untrustworthy and was from same the universe as Add. She wouldn't be much help. So he tried to enlist help from the Search Party's males but that failed. What remained was a help from the 3rd party.

Someone who knew the situation well, and someone who would support him fully without any trickery.

"So find out who's the target that I can kiss most easily….. Find out what girls are thinking."

"This is a really strange story…… so you're basically asking me to gather the Search Party's girls in one place then ask them which guy is on their mind the most?"

"……I didn't tell you to do that."

Ah, why was his ears turning red just from hearing that? Add hoped Ignia wouldn't notice his state as he rubbed his ears.

"But that should be the fastest way. Isn't it basically gathering all the girls then having a chat about love relationships?"

Rather than Add asking the girls, Ignia who was a girl asking instead should yield more honest answers.

Ignia frowned.

"You aren't messing with me right? I won't let you off if that's the case. I'll burn you to crisp."

"I'm not doing this because I want to."

"…..Really?"

Ignia stared at Add for a while then nodded as if she accepted Add's circumstance.

"Alright, then so that Gloria and Darkmoon in your universe can live happily….. I have to find out who is the girl that has the most chance of kissing you. I may not look it but I'm still a priestess…and yet I'll have to become some sort of love diviner for this? This is depressing."

"There's not much time so hurry."

"Alright, alright."

Ignia made an expression as if it couldn't be helped then turned around.

"I'll check it out right away tonight. But don't get your hopes up too much."

"You better come through."

At Add's words, Ignia sighed then walked away while sulking.

"Just my luck. Love divination all of a sudden….."

Ignia was openly expressing her complaints but she will certainly try her best. Although it was by improvisation, Add acquired a cooperator on the girls' side.

Even though Add had lived so far without interest in love relationships, he at least knew that this sort of topic became more honest when only people of same genders were gathered. Ignia was a magnificent cooperator in this situation.

"Alright, should I go and wait for the result?"

Let's finish repairing the Dynamos while waiting for Ignia's information. Add headed back to his lodge.

Moon rose high in the sky.

All of the El Search Party's girls gathered inside the hot springs' open-air bath where the golden moon was clearly visible.

"……So why did you call us out this late?"

Aisha who was rubbing her shoulders muttered as if she had some kind of complaint. Ara modestly sat beside Aisha then replied.

"Ms.Priestess called us out here."

"Alright, is everyone here?"

Ignia sat on top of a stone with her legs crossed then spoke cheerfully. Eve who had been bathing shoulder deep inside the water objected.

"Lu isn't here."

"We don't have to wake up a sleeping kid. And…."

Ignia shook her head after recalling Add's words. Lu didn't count so she didn't have to care about her.

'….I don't get why I have to be a love consultant.'

Ignia muttered internally while looking at the faces of the bathing Search Party members one by one.

Aisha had a reluctant expression, Rena's face was stiff, Eve unexpectedly looked like she was enjoying the bath, Ara was politely waiting for Ignia to speak and Elesis was playing around by rubbing her chin on top of Rena's shoulder.

'So it just has to be one of these five? Ah, I can't figure this out at all……'

Still, as someone who called them out here she shouldn't remain silent for too long. Ignia muttered internally then spoke whatever that came to her mind.

"Since this is our last night in the hot springs. I called all of you out here to have a chat with just us girls. The reason why we're doing this at night is because guys might try to peep on us."

"Peep on us?"

Aisha looked around while openly expressing hostility. It looked like she was going to attack immediately if she just saw a guy's hair.

"Would there really be someone who'll do such a thing?"

"There's nothing bad with being cautious, Ara."

When Ara made a surprised face as if that was impossible, Eve warned Ara saying she shouldn't let her guard down too much.

Rena narrowed her eyes as if she didn't like what she was hearing.

"Raven will control everybody on the guys' side so that shouldn't happen."

"Well, if they show up thinking strange things, then I'll send them off flying in a strange direction."

Ignia sang inside her mind when Elesis grinned as if she needed a chance to warm up. Everyone was worked up over what Ignia had said without much thought.

She had casted the line without any bait but they bit.

When everyone spoke their minds, Ignia measured her timing then spoke appropriately.

"Come to think of it, guys in the El Search Party seems quite nice. They are good and fighting and handsome."

Aisha denied as if she was telling Ignia to drop the nonsense.

"Ah, take Elsword out of there. He's such a kid."

"That's not true, Mr.Elsword is more thoughtful than he looks."

"Only ones deserving of that praise is Big Brother Raven or Big Brother Ciel. Although Chung is cute he's still young….."

But Ara disagreed with Aisha's evaluation.

"But Mr.Chung tries his best very earnestly."

"If you considered their mental ages, Raven would be the highest."

"Even Ms.Eve? Aren't all of you treating Mr.Elsword and Mr.Chung too much like kids?"

"Well he's my dependable brother…. But it's still hard to take my eyes off him."

When even Elesis joined in, Ara became sullen and shut her mouth. It looked like she didn't agree with everyone else but was keeping silent to avoid conflict.

Ignia spoke mischievously on purpose to prod.

"Ooh? It looks like Ara likes Elsword."

"……Huh? Eh? Eeeh?"

"What?!"

Startled voice from before was Ara's but who's scream was that after? Ignia and the other girls looked towards where the loud voice came from.

Aisha who suddenly became the focus of attention replied as her face turned red.

"W-why are you all looking at me strangely like that? I didn't say anything yet."

"Although I do think that Mr.Elsword is cute…."

"What? He's cute?"

At Ara's words, Aisha forgot the circumstances and leered at Ara. It was as if she forgot being startled and now she couldn't admit such description existing in this world.

"Just what about him is cute? Even this time, he almost read the map wrong and we almost got into trouble. We were glad I was keeping an eye on him. Otherwise we wouldn't have reached the Temple of Fire in time. He's such a handful troublemaker. Just who does he take after?"

"Hmm, yea. I wonder who he takes after."

Aisha who was muttering froze from the voice that came from behind her. Soft arms were hugging Aisha's neck from behind her.

"B-Big Sister Elesis?"

"What's wrong? I'm not being angry. It's true that Elsword is still lacking. I'm thankful that Aisha is always taking care of him."

Aisha pouted from what Elesis said as she hugged her from behind.

"I wouldn't have to if he was at least half like you Big Sister Elesis."

"Oh? You flatter me Aisha."

"Kyah!?"

Aisha got surprised and twisted around when Elesis smiled and kissed her on the cheek.

"W-what are you doing?"

"I'm praising you instead of Big Sister Rena."

"…..Why are you mentioning me there?"

Rena who had been keeping silent spoke up as if she couldn't accept what was being said. Then Elesis who was hugging Aisha stole a glance at Rena as if she was very saddened.

"It's because Big Sister Rena doesn't give us goodnight kisses recently."

"…...You're all at an age where you don't need them."

"But you gave them before. Are you abandoning us now that we've grown up? As I thought, Big Sister Rena only likes little girls."

"Don't say something strange when the kids are listening!"

Rena got startled and raised her voice when Elesis faked a sad voice. She knew that Elesis was just messing around but she couldn't ignore this.

But Elesis was already in full throttle and didn't stop.

"Sniff, I see. So since I'm taller and have bigger breasts now I'm not Big Sister Rena's type anymore? You're only going to adore Lu from now on? Just you wait, I'll become younger too somehow and become Big Sister's type! If that time comes, it won't be any use even if you beg and cry to let you touch me because I'm so cute!"

"Like I said, don't say something strange when the kids are listening! Just when did I ever do those things!!?"

Everyone looked curiously when Rena who usually stayed cool denied so aggressively with a reddened face.

Ara asked with a surprised expression.

"So Ms.Rena will give you a goodnight kiss if you become younger?"

"Yes, how about Ara, Big Sister Rena? Her body is mature but her face still looks young!"

"…..Let me go first before you talk about something like this. Big Sister Elesis."

Aisha who was still being hugged by Elesis sighed.

Ignia's couldn't dare to intrude in this mess. Things seemed to be going as she intended….but then the topic flew off to a totally strange direction after Elesis joined in.

Elesis let Aisha go then she made Ara stand up, grabbed her by the shoulder then pushed her towards Rena.

"Here, Big Sister Rena! It's Ara! Ara who looks young, is cute and strong! Adore her instead of me! I'll be watching while bitterly shedding tears from here."

"……"

Rena's face turned red as she put her hand on her forehead then sighed. She couldn't keep up with Elesis.

"I'll really get angry if you keep saying things that kids will misunderstand, Elly."

Elesis shrugged then took a step back once she was called by her nickname.

"If Big Sister Rena won't give you one, then let me give you one instead Ara."

"Ah, yes…. thank you."

Ara nodded with a dazed expression when Elesis lightly kissed her on the cheek then let her go.

Aisha who was watching from a distance sighed.

"Just what kind of mess is this….."

"Ah, did you get jealous because I was cheating on you Aisha? Don't worry my dear Aisha, even though I kissed with Ara, I'll always come running for you no matter what."

"I don't know what you mean but please take out the word 'cheating' first."

Aisha muttered as Elesis laughed merrily.

When it seemed like the situation had settled down a bit, Ignia made some fake coughs then turned back to the original topic.

"Then…. what about guys other than Elsword?"

"What do you mean?"

Eve who didn't join in on the ruckus from before because she was enjoying the bath opened her eyes then asked.

Ignia didn't want to say it herself so she just shrugged.

"Well…. you all know what I mean."

"Hmm?"

"If Big Sister Rena won't give you one, then let me give you one instead Ara."

Ignia felt somehow troubled at how Elesis was staring at her piercingly so she hastily continued her words.

"Although I may not look it, I'm a Priestess. I can at least do something like read people's love compatibility."

"Compatibility?"

Aisha seemed strangely interested. Ara also opened her eyes widely.

"Compatibility? Do you know how to do divination Ms.Priestess?"

"Well, I'm a priestess after all……"

There was no rule that priestesses couldn't lie after all. When Ignia answered appropriately, Elesis withdrew her gaze from Ignia then sat down.

Ignia became sweaty not because of heat from the hot springs, but because she became nervous. Ignia started to become cautious towards Elesis.

'….Why did she stare at me like that?'

Ignia could tell right away that Elesis held a strong position not only amongst girls of the group but in the entire El Search Party. Even possessing playfulness and sociability, she was technically the leader of the El Search Party.

And she was bit difficult to handle right now.

Was it because she had to follow Add's request and prod for girls' reaction even though she didn't want to? Ignia felt guilty for some reason as she examined the girls' reaction.

Rena spoke dazedly.

"Love compatibility…."

"You all must be interested."

When Ignia grinned, Aisha folded her arms then looked away.

"Love compatibility? What use would that be? There's no handsome guys here anyways."

"But I'm bit interested in divination. Can you read my compatibility?"

In contrast to Aisha, Ara seemed quite interested.

Ignia had been throwing anything that she could think of trying to bring about a situation where they talked about guys of the Search Party. But she got a bit startled at Ara's overly interested reaction.

"A-alright. I'll take a look at yours after."

"What happens if you have a good compatibility?"

"Well, it means you two will get together well, Eve. Although I didn't think priestesses could look into such things."

Ignia felt somehow guilty from what Elesis said so she replied however she could.

"It's just a hobby that I learned because I was bored. Don't expect too much."

"Then should I ask for my readings too? Although I think I'll get the best compatibility with Elsword."

Aisha responded sharply to Elesis' words.

"Do you believe that too Big Sister? It's just a baseless myth."

"I don't think that's something a magician should say." Eve replied to Aisha's words.

"It's just for fun. Why don't you get yours read too Aisha? Maybe you'll get a good compatibility with Elsword."

Aisha's face turned red.

"Why are you keep putting me together with that idiot?"

"Just like what you said, Elsword is still lacking. So until Elsword grows up, I want Aisha to stay beside and look after him."

"….That's something you should be doing Big Sister."

Elesis shook her head from side to side.

"But you did great in going to the Temple of Fire and bringing the Fire Priestess."

"Although Big Brother Raven and Big Brother Ciel took care of almost everything…."

"So I want to entrust Elsword to you until he becomes like them."

"……What if I said I don't want to?"

When Aisha replied with a tone as if she half gave up, Elesis looked back towards Rena.

"Big Sister Rena, Aisha won't listen to me. Give me a kiss again so I feel better."

"…..I told you not to say something that kids with misunderstand! And when did I ever do something like that?"

"When I just entered the Red Knights and met you for the first time? You gave me one saying I was cute."

"Just how long ago was that?! That was just as a joke!"

Then Elesis covered up her body with her arms then looked away as if she was embarrassed.

"I'd like Big Sister Rena to keep playing more jokes on me……"

"….I'm going to be angry."

It was clear that Elesis was just messing around, but Rena couldn't help but to react because many people were watching.

Actually, Rena and Elesis had been together as comrades the longest in the El Search Party….so they knew each other's weaknesses well. But because how their personalities were right now, Elesis was using Rena's past and weaknesses efficiently while Rena was avoiding joking around altogether.

Thus, Rena was overwhelmingly disadvantageous and she couldn't get seriously furious from something minor like this. Two of them had been together for long and wanted to be together from now on as well.

Ignia who was watching the two's squabble carefully opened her mouth.

"You keep talking about kisses….."

"It was just a kiss on the cheek, Ms.Priestess! And I only did it because she couldn't sleep from being scared!"

Rena protested with a loud voice as if she was falsely accused. It was as if she was saying how could someone like a priestess say such indecent words.

"Yes, anyways since stories about kisses keep coming up….."

The story kept going off in a weird direction but Ignia's objective tonight was collecting information. Ignia spoke carefully while hoping she wouldn't sound odd.

"Anyone ever done it with a guy?"

"….."

Everyone suddenly became silent. It felt like a cold wind blew by even though they were in warm hot springs.

"…..You mean on the mouth?"

"Are you talking about that pointless membrane contact?"

Ara acted embarrassed but Eve concluded biologically. And Elesis spoke regrettably while looking at Rena.

"It would have been great if Big Sister Rena was a guy….."

Rena must have decided to ignore Elesis because she kept silent, Aisha's face had turned bright red and she wasn't saying anything. It seemed like Ignia finally got the control of this chaotic conversation so she sang internally while pressing for a response.

"No one is saying anything. So none of you have done it?"

"My first kiss was with Big Sister Rena during a sweet night……"

"I'll really get angry if you steer the topic in that direction again, Elly."

Elesis turned around to glance at the other girls when Rena spoke sharply to her. Everyone had their own thoughts while keeping silent.

Elesis clenched her fists then nodded.

"It can't be helped. I'll go do it with Elsword right now."

"What are you going to do?! No, why are you doing it!?"

Aisha got surprised and got up to stop Elesis. Elesis smiled mischievously at Aisha as if she had been waiting for her to react like this.

"Why can't I do it? Then who should?"

"Eh? T-that's….."

"Is there a reason why I can't? Is there someone already reserved for Elsword?"

Aisha's face turned bright red at Elesis' question as she remained silent. Ara must have imagined something as well because she asked as her face became red.

"Uh….. Is that something you must do?"

"It an pointless act, Ara."

"It's not pointless, Eve."

Rena unexpectedly joined in on the conversation.

"It's something you do when you want to convey your feelings to someone who's important to you. I think Eve would understand too if you try it one day."

"I don't understand."

"Someone important…."

Unlike Eve who responded sharply, Ara closed her mouth tightly as if she was thinking about something. Seeing this, Eve spoke as if she was reluctant to ask.

"Why are humans so interested in this 'kiss'? Add asked me about it before too."

"Mr.Add asked Ms.Eve about a kiss?"

Eve nodded when Ara got surprised and asked.

"He asked what I thought about kisses so I answered it's just a membrane contact. He understood right away for someone who's useless."

"…..Hmm, it will be difficult to explain it in a way that Eve can understand. I think you'll understand when you try it yourself one day."

When even Elesis joined in, Eve looked reluctant but nodded.

"I'll keep that in mind."

"It's good if you do it a lot once you have someone who's important to you. Isn't that right, Ms.Priestess?"

"…..Y-yea. I think so too."

Ignia nodded in response when Elesis asked while staring carefully at her. Actually, Ignia who grew up as a priestess had never done such a thing before. But the opinion Rena and Elesis presented sounded reasonable.

Anyways, Ignia managed to turn the topic towards the kiss… but it seemed difficult to ask what they thought about Add. She had originally planned to bring up each guy one by one until they got to Add, but the conversation went off in a wrong direction soon as Elsword's name came up.

'…..Do I have to be satisfied with just this?'

Although the result so far hadn't been satisfactory, it would be troublesome if she tried to dig deeper than this and got found out. Even Ignia could sense that the fact that she was asked by Add to do this shouldn't be found out.

Also, how Elesis was looking at her was strangely bothersome. When Ignia didn't speak anymore, Elesis muttered regrettably.

"But the reason why Big Sister Rena doesn't give me kisses anymore…..is because I'm not important to her anymore right? But I'm always looking at Big Sister Rena….."

"Didn't you say you were always looking at me before…..?"

When Aisha spoke up from being confused, Elesis made a very regrettable expression.

"My heart is looking at Aisha…. But my body cannot forget Big Sister Rena's passionate kiss. How Big Sister comforted me who was shivering from fear and worry with her hot and tenacious….."

"Elesisssss!!"

Rena finally exploded.

Late night.

Add was repairing the Dynamos when he realized it was almost the appointed time and raised his head. Add was rubbing his eyes when Eun sleeping on the bed came into his view. She wasn't in her small fox form and was instead in Ara's form. Her 4 white tails were lying about on the bed.

'4?'

Didn't Eun originally have 9 tails? Come to think of it, there were 5 tails when he was using them as pillows yesterday and now she had 4.

"It shouldn't matter……"

Add exited the room and headed downstairs. He examined the condition of his Dynamos floating around him. Number of Dynamos that could be used now were 5, he just needed to repair one more.

He would like to pull an all-nighter to finish the repairs… But the El Search Party was heading out for the final showdown with demons early tomorrow.

"Although, it doesn't look like I'll have to fight much."

Every individual in this El Search Party had enormous combat capabilities. Almost to the point where even D would struggle against them.

Of course, due to law of the universes it will be difficult for them to face each other…..

"After time travel, it's now universe travel…. How ridiculous."

Add looked back at his life and chuckled while walking along the hallway.

He was researching time travel then arrived at a distant future, Eve who held the key to him going back to the past was being destroyed by demons and finally the one who was commanding those demons was his future self.

Now he escaped into another universe to avoid getting killed and to search for a way to get rid of his future self.

What a ridiculous life. Although Add didn't usually dwell in self-pity, just recalling his life made him sigh.

Add stopped at the stairway landing heading downstairs then leaned on the wall and closed his eyes. She didn't arrive even though it was little over the promised time.

Just when Add was thinking about going to see her, footsteps were heard and red haired girl appeared.

Ignia who somehow looked exhausted walked up the stairs while shaking her head then spoke after noticing Add.

"You're rather early."

"And you're late. Try to be on time, time is…."

Precious? It seemed quite empty when Add was the one saying it.

When Add stopped in middle of his words, Ignia walked up the stairs and complained.

"It's not like I was late because I was putting on makeups, I was listening to your request."

"So, the information?"

"That's…."

Add asked Ignia to find information on what El Search Party's girls thought about him.

To figure out who would be easiest to kiss.

"We should refrain from asking the girls directly from now on. Don't expect too much."

"I wasn't joking when I asked…."

"No, this is because we might get found out."

Add who was about to lecture Ignia stopped. Ignia spoke as if something was hanging on her mind.

"Elesis was giving me a weird look. It looked like you were going to get found out if I asked more specifically. That would be bad for you, right?"

"….That girl is really a bother."

She was too strong as an enemy and really a bother as an ally. Add nodded after acknowledging Ignia's troubles.

"I got it. Just tell me whenever you get any more useful information. It's probably better not to raise Elesis' suspicion."

"Okay. So what I got from today was…."

Ignia paused for a moment then spoke.

"Most of them seems to be interested in Elsword."

"……."

So you're popular even in this universe? Add frowned from his mood turning fowl.

"I don't care about that idiot. I need an information about me."

"I'm sorry but I couldn't find out that much. Elesis kept making the conversation go astray whenever I tried to go in detail. Although she probably didn't realize I was doing it because you asked….."

Girls of the El Search Party are mostly attracted to Elsword, Hahahaha!

….What use did this information serve him? As Add's made a very agitated expression from the information that was better if he didn't hear, Ignia raised and wagged her index finger adorably.

It was strangely cute.

"Don't get so frustrated like that and think positively. You can cross out girls that like Elsword from the list instead."

"So, who are those?"

"Aisha and Ara….? Maybe not her. Anyways, I think we should give up on Aisha."

"I know that too."

Wasn't this something that already came from Eun's affection point(?) parameter? Raising affection point of that very prideful and arrogant Aisha wouldn't be easy.

"And…. it seems Elesis and Rena had kissed each other before."

"….."

What kind of crazy talk was this? Ignia explained herself when Add looked on with an empty expression.

"She was acting as if she was joking…but although Elesis expresses physical affection freely towards other girls….. It didn't look like she knew a lot about guys. She did get embarrassed when I asked if she had ever kissed with a guy."

Even though Ignia had been cautious of Elesis, she did manage to examine her reactions. Elesis had continuously steered the mood by teasing or playing with other girls but she couldn't answer properly at the question asking her if she had ever kissed with a guy.

Saying she'll go kiss with Elsword….was also probably something she said to steer the mood.

"I don't intend to put Elesis in the list of candidates…."

"What? Did you already make up your mind? I'm not going to be fussy or arrogant because I'm a priestess or anything…. But if you're going to make me do something for you, shouldn't you explain what you want more in detail?"

"No, that's not what I mean…."

Kiss with Elesis? He couldn't imagine it no matter what. When Add kept quiet, Ignia narrowed her eyes then asked.

"Wait, could you possibly…."

"Don't say it."

"Have not kissed with a girl before?"

I told you not to say it. Please.

Add glared at the wall as if nothing was wrong then replied while hoping he sounded cool as possible.

"Stuff like that isn't important."

"It's very important."

Ignia was waving her arms then stopped. It seemed she intended to lightly smack Add's head with the spear she usually carried around but she was barehanded right now.

Ignia put one hand on her waist then looked straightly at Add.

No, she was glaring at him.

"What is this? You asked me to look into the girls' feelings but you've never done it either? Is this a joke?"

"…..Because there were more important things."

Saying that someone important to him gave him one before as a sign to grow up well would sound pitiful.

Ignia became furious when Add tried to evade the topic.

"Are you joking? You said you must go back so that situation in your universe can be solved right? So are you going to do things this half-heartedly?"

"I'll deal with it when the time comes by myself."

"That's funny coming from a guy who never kissed with a girl. Have you even held hands with a girl?"

"Hey, I at least did that much. Not only girl's hands but….."

Add got furious for a moment and tried to retort but stopped after realizing what he was saying. It was such a low-class conversation.

Ignia scoffed.

"Since you said it so boldly that you needed a kiss to back…. I thought you were some kind of infamous womanizer in that universe……"

"….I'm not doing this because I want to. And I wouldn't have asked you if I was knowledgeable about this kind of thing."

Ignia must have accepted because she nodded then sighed.

"So you're saying… you can only go back if you kiss a girl from the El Search Party except Lu and me, but you're a complete brattish kid who've never kissed a girl?"

"…..Who's a brattish kid?"

"This stupid guy right in front of me."

Ignia spoke sharply as if to say don't try to refute me then muttered again.

"……I thought your way of speaking was strange from the start. So I can assume that you don't know anything about a girl's feelings?"

"……"

Why? Do you need to know that to time travel?

But Ignia who couldn't possibly know about time travel was groaning as if she was struggling to think of a solution. This was Add's problem but it looked like she was worried about it as if it was her own problem.

Ignia spoke with a tone as if she made up her mind.

"Fine, let's narrow down the candidates. Aisha is omitted. Do you have any particular requests?"

"Not really."

"How can a guy lack so much backbone? Speak more clearly, like who you want to kiss, or who you're attracted to, stuff like that. Didn't you say you travelled with the El Search Party on your side as well?"

"I'm an engineer….."

Ignia looked at Add as if she discovered a most useless mechanical part in the world.

"Ah, is that so Mr.Engineer? So you were struggling with mechanical parts all your life that you don't know anything about girls and haven't even held a girl's wrist, is that it? And you've never thought even once about girls?"

"….Even if the El Search Party in this and other universes have same names and faces, they aren't completely same people. It's questionable if they should be treated as same."

Add expressed a logical opinion but Ignia laughed it off.

"What you said is morally correct but let's push it aside for now and speak about something immoral. If it comes to worst, we'll have to tell this directly to the El Search Party's girls and ask for their cooperation."

"What?"

"What do you mean what? If you reveal that you need a kiss from a girl to go back, wouldn't they help you out of pity?"

"……"

Just listening to it felt very repulsive. Wasn't it too stupid and pitiful?

It was basically begging on one's knees. Feeling like a beggar, Add shook his head furiously.

"I don't…. want that."

"I don't want to go down that route too much either. It's such a low class and non-delicate way. But we have to consider this option as well since you're saying you're Mr.Engineer who never held a girl's wrist. Got it?"

"…..I did hold hands with a girl before."

Although he didn't want to say it because it sounded sad.

At Add's final protest, Ignia scoffed coldly then suddenly held Add's hand.

"There, it's second time now right?"

"……"

Add couldn't say anything in protest. Although he was offended because it felt like he was being looked down upon, he could feel that unlike Eun, Ignia was being sincere. It was true that Add had been only interested in Nasod research and time travel that he had never taken interest in girls.

Ignia was much more logical and better assistant than Eun. When Add acknowledged, Ignia let go of Add's hand then started counting with her fingers.

"So, what should we do then….. So summing it up again, you have to choose who to kiss from Rena, Eve, Elesis and Ara? I took out Aisha since it felt like she'd be difficult."

"Well, probably….."

Add agreed to Ignia's seamless continuation of the main topic. Although he didn't like Ignia's tone and her evaluation of him, he couldn't deny that she was speaking reasonably.

"Alright, let's think together about who to choose from now on. When do you have to do this by? Is there a time limit?"

"….."

Add couldn't say that it was until he stole Eve's core so he replied appropriately.

"Before we destroy Scar and other demons, or right after."

Repairs on Dynamos will finish by then and even if it wasn't, El Search Party will be weakened from battle against demons. It was the perfect time to act.

"Alright. Got it. Leave the big picture to me. I'll try to craft a situation where you can control what's going on."

"…..I'll be counting on you."

Although Add didn't know what Ignia was thinking, he didn't have any reason to refuse her when she was saying she'll help. It was just that he didn't expect she'd help this actively.

After Add's answer, Ignia walked towards Add. Add instinctively backed out when Ignia suddenly closed in and they were at a distance where their chests were almost about to touch. But Ignia didn't stop even when Add backed out.

"What are you doing?"

"….."

Ignia approached without answering to Add's question so Add had to back out to prevent making contact with her. But this place was a stairway landing, it wasn't such a wide place so Add's back hit the wall.

There was nowhere to run. Ignia thankfully stopped her steps at a risky distance where they were almost touching.

It felt like something was about to happen so Add became alert…. Then Ignia spoke in an edgy voice.

"You're really a wimp….."

"What?"

He's been through all sorts of dangers and obstacles and this is the evaluation he gets? Add became furious but Ignia ignored him and stood on her tiptoe.

Not just her chest but her face was getting closer. Add had to stop being angry and close his mouth.

Ignia spoke after bringing her face closer.

"You're trying to escape when a girl is coming closer to you. What else are you but a wimp?"

"….What are you thinking?"

If what Eun did was a tease, Add could feel that Ignia was serious.

Add could tell because just like how he was forcing himself to hide his uneasiness from two of them standing so close together, Ignia's face also looked uneasy as well.

"…..Let's say that I help you and the perfect chance comes. Are you confident that you can do it at that time?"

"……"

To describe it simply, Ignia was asking if Add could finish the meal properly if she cooked it for him. Add was about to reply of course but his words stopped when he stared at Ignia's eyes looking up at him at a close distance.

Ignia's face was bright red as well.

"When the chance comes…. Can you do it without hesitating?"

"……"

If you compared this to proving theory using experiments….. Scientific experiments are done by changing the variables continuously in order to prove a theory.

The reason Add could say he can control Dynamos as if they were his hands and feet was because he went through enormous effort to reach this state of mastery. He wasn't proficient at it from the start.

The point was that…. No one was ever good at something from the start. One needed a lot of effort and experience in order to be good at something.

But never mind kissing, Add hadn't even been interested in girls before.

Ignia was pointing this fact out. When the time comes, can he actually do the act properly?

"…..So what are you getting at?"

When Add asked coldly on purpose, Ignia lowered her gaze slightly.

"I told you. I'll help you in any way I can."

"……"

So, did this mean he should kiss Ignia to gain experience so that he didn't make mistakes later? Add did assume this was the case but actually hearing it made his mind go numb. He understood that Ignia was correct but felt an indescribable reluctance at the same time.

"……You kept talking about how I haven't done it before, but did you?"

"……Do you think a priestess would have done such a thing?"

Ignia's face turned red as she criticised. She was completely different from when she was scolding and blaming Add before.

It was no doubt that this situation where she was so close to Add was very embarrassing…and difficult to withstand for her as well.

When Add didn't say anything, Ignia kept quiet as well.

It was a moment where both couldn't decide what to do next and was wondering if they should close the distance or not. Awkward moment where they were looking at each other's eyes then looking away continued….then it seemed Ignia finally made up her mind as she pushed her face closer.

And Add moved as well.

"…..I'll handle it okay even without doing this."

Add spoke clearly after grabbing Ignia's shoulders. After getting stopped, Ignia looked at Add with a blank expression for a moment then made a bitter smile as she took a step back.

"You're really naive aren't you?"

"…..Why do I have to be called that?"

"Shouldn't you accept right away if a pretty girl like me asks for a kiss? You won't say that I'm not pretty right? I'll roast you if say it."

"I'll look forward to the big picture you'll come up with. Try your best. I'll act according to that."

When Add turned his head away to avoid her gaze, Ignia made mysterious expression then backed out while putting both of her hands behind her back.

"Alright, fine. Continuing to ask after being refused isn't classy as well. Like I said, tell me if there's anything I can do to help. I'll cooperate with anything I can."

"….Just go back for now. They'll get suspicious if you're away for too long."

"Refusing Fire Priestess' first kiss. I don't care if you get cursed."

"……"

When Add didn't answer, Ignia plodded down the stairs. When her footsteps couldn't be heard anymore, Add sighed as he closed his eyes.

"Phew….."

He did stop Ignia because…. that feeling of reluctance. But he rightfully deserved to be called a wimp.

That petty membrane contact, wouldn't it be better to experience it few times to get used to it? Add knew as an engineer how important previous experiences were.

And that he might hesitate or make mistakes if the time came.

"I'm…. really foolish."

Add sneered at himself then looked up at the moon through the window. The moon was shining brightly regardless of how bleak Add's mind was.

Kiss with someone from the El Search Party is needed to go back.

Eun and Ignia will cooperate with Add from behind the scenes and set up the stage for him. With their help, even Add who was unknowledgeable about girls will be able to grasp a chance somehow.

But….. Add wasn't confident if he could actually go through with the kiss when that chance came.

He didn't know what this reluctance in his heart was….

"So is boy's night stroll over now?"

"….."

Add didn't look back to respond. Voice's owner approached silently, stood beside Add then opened the window widely.

Night breeze came in through the window. Add opened his mouth first when fox standing beside him didn't say anything.

"Why are you quiet?"

"Boy must have his own thoughts as well. He didn't refuse for no reason."

It was a reasonable reaction from her for once. Eun spoke serenely as she looked up at the moon.

"Things will go well since Fire Priestess is going to help. I'll also lend my hand."

"Just don't get in the way."

"Why would I after coming this far? Can't you trust my sincerity now? Foxes only lends their tails to someone they accepted from their heart."

Well she wouldn't have anything else to tease him with anyways. Add agreed wordlessly then Eun made a bitter smile.

"Looks like I have boy trapped within my tails."

Eun's eyes as she looked up at the moon was soaked with sorrow.

"Looking at another universe's moon is rather enjoyable. It's especially special since I'm looking at it together with the one who's together with me till the end of time."

Eun spoke while still staring up at the moon.

"Do you know? Phantom Foxes gather power from basking in moonlight. First dozens, hundreds of days merely gives more vitality. Then after thousand days of receiving moonlight, you obtain wisdom, then after ten thousand days, you realize how to breathe with heaven and earth."

"You become like that just from receiving moonlight?"

"Of course, you must first know how to breathe in moonlight. Anyways, you gather moon's essence inside your body in this manner. That is the source of my power. It's basically something equivalent to the girl's core."

"Hmm…."

This unexpected story was rather interesting but Eun didn't speak anymore. Add didn't ask further and just strengthened his resolve for what will come after.

"Looks like I have boy trapped within my tails."

After tonight they will face off against the demons. He will achieve his goal during that battle and go back to his universe.

Final battle with D was waiting for him there.

"……I'll destroy D no matter what."

"Yes, I'll cheer boy on hoping that he'll achieve his goal."

"Don't speak as if you're not involved. Isn't getting rid of D your goal as well?"

Eun only made a mysterious smile and didn't answer. Add didn't mind and grasped his fist lightly.

"During the road toward final battle against demons, we must obtain a way to go back and a way to defeat D tomorrow. Cooperate with me."

"……Yes, if boy believes that hurting the girl is the only way."

Eun's response was as if she was lamenting and somehow mocking Add, but Add pretended he haven't heard. He wasn't going to hesitate after coming this far.

"But I ask you, at least keep these words embedded in your heart. Boy, at least don't become a devil."

"Devil? What are you saying? This isn't the time to care about ways and means. To defeat a devil, there's no choice but to become a monster worse than a devil."

When Add spoke sharply, Eun only made a bitter smile as if she had nothing to say in response. When Eun didn't say anything and looked up solely at the moon, Add also looked up at the night sky as well.

That's right. He couldn't hesitate. He will become even worse monster than a devil so he can kill the devil.

For the sake of someone precious to him.

For the sake of people that believed in him and treated him dearly.

Because Add was resolving himself, he didn't realize what kind of eyes Eun was staring at him with.

Fox staring at Add's resolute face twitched her lips. Fox swallowed the words she was originally going to say then spoke to herself inside her mind.

'The end is slowly approaching…..'

Time to close the curtains on a stage where two of them danced about together.

2. Wandering Heart

Grand Cavern where Scar was carrying out the ritual to revive the demon god. You originally had to go through the Temple of Fire to get there but that was impossible now because the Temple of Fire collapsed during Ignia's battle with the demons. So the group had to unfortunately use the cavern that connects hot springs to the Grand Cavern.

Add walked on his feet without using the Dynamos as he questioned himself.

"Why did we divide teams?"

"Because demons might be planning something. It will be better than everyone moving together then falling into a trap all at once. Also, caves could be rather…."

Rena walking in front of the group spoke when Elesis trailed her words.

"They could try to bring the entire cave down."

"……"

Well, this cave was located underground so it was indeed all over if they got buried. Ara got surprised and hastily looked around.

"Then wouldn't demons actually try to bring the cave down? We have to hurry!"

"That probably won't happen. Temple of Fire route is blocked so demons would lose their way out as well if they destroyed this path."

At Eve's voice coming from the back, Elesis added.

"Yes, also Scar is hotblooded. He'll want to settle the score with me. Although I'm bit worried about Karis……."

Add kept quiet as he examined the group's reaction. Dividing up the team just in case the cave collapsed was fine…. But this team composition looked totally suspicious.

Ignia who was walking at the very front looked back then smiled.

"This cave has many different paths so such thing will be impossible. We'll get some fresh air if we go straight this way for 3 more hours. People of Lanox call it the 'garden'. It has a really nice view."

"Then shall we have lunch there?"

"That sounds wonderful."

Ara's face brightened from hearing about a meal. Add who was listening to the conversation sighed internally.

…..Why am I the only guy here again?

Rena, Eve, Elesis, Ara, Ignia and Add were this team's composition. But Add could guess who formed this team.

The one responsible for composing this team looked back then gave a cute wink.

……Yes, you're rather capable Ignia.

He didn't know what Ignia said to make the team like this but it was a correct choice. To kiss someone you needed to raise their affection, and to do that, you needed to create a situation to be face to face with the target. Aisha and Lu were exempted so this was perfect members to achieve Add's goal.

Add was thinking about this then gasped for air when his neck was suddenly strangled.

"Why are you so quiet all of a sudden, Add?"

Elesis had put her arm around Add's neck and was pulling him towards her. Add couldn't speak even if he wanted to because of pain in his neck.

Ara nodded when Add kept desperately hitting Elesis' arm.

"Mr.Add must be hungry too."

"It seemed he didn't eat much during breakfast. Add, you have to eat a lot to grow taller."

I'm going to die before I get to eat anything! When Add hit Elesis' arm faster, she must have finally got the message because she let him go.

"Ah, sorry. I was treating you same as Elsword. Did it hurt?"

"….You're strong like a monster as always."

Elesis became embarrassed and scratched her head when Add remarked distastefully.

"Thanks for the compliment."

"……."

Her reaction annoyed Add because it felt just like Elsword's.

Wouldn't it have been better to send Elesis off to the other team? Noticing Add's gaze, Elesis pushed her face closer to Add.

"It must have hurt a lot. Can I take a look?"

"There's no need."

She might do something dangerous again. When Add hastily coved his neck and backed up, Ara stepped forward this time.

"Want me to take a look instead?"

"You don't need to, Ara."

Eve pulled Ara's arm to stop her. Add rubbed his neck as he muttered internally.

'I'm getting too much attention…..'

"Why do you look so down? Is there something you're worried about?"

"……I just have some things to think about."

Add quickened his steps as Elesis stared directly at him.

If the team composition last time was Elesis' scheme, it was Ignia who prepared this team for Add's scheme this time.

His only problem was affection points.

The garden Ignia talked about was an empty field between two steep cliffs.

Add was scanning the area for potential enemies….when Ara looked up at the sun and made a joyful expression.

"Looking at Mr.Sun after so long feels nice."

"Yes it does. There's even a clear lake over there where travellers take a break."

"Really? Then… shall we rest here for a bit?"

Elesis' eyes gleamed as she started to rummage through her bag. Rena saw how Elesis was acting completely relaxed so she scolded her.

"Elesis, don't become too relaxed. There might be an ambush."

"That's even better. Numbers we'll have to face in their main base will decrease. We just have to smash through anything that comes in our way."

"……"

Rena hadn't expected such a response so she didn't complain any further.

"What do you mean…..?"

"It would be great if Karis showed up right now. Our job will be much easier that way."

Elesis was hoping Karis to show up. On second thought…. Rena realized that Elesis' opinion wasn't too far fetched.

"Scar should know very well that sending only minions won't be able to stop me. But Karis also didn't come out when I provoked her last time, right? She didn't show up despite her looking like an impatient type. That means there's some reason that's preventing them from coming to face us directly."

"What do you mean?" Eve who was listening asked.

"I don't know exactly how the demon god resurrection ritual works. But Karis and Scar that could directly threaten us aren't coming to face us directly. It seems they can't do anything but wait even though they know we're coming to the Grand Cavern."

Elesis stopped rummaging through her bag then grinned while looking around the group.

"So its more advantageous for us if they send more minions to attack us. Because that means there will be less enemies we have to face at the Grand Cavern. So let's clean things up if demons like In and Jin shows up."

"…..What you're saying is oddly persuasive."

Ignia spoke for everyone else with an empty expression.

It was an unbelievable opinion. She was saying it would be better if they were attacked. Although it was true that El Search Party did have the strength to back that opinion up….

Rena also didn't have any words to refute so she spoke begrudgingly.

"But let's not let our guards down too much….."

"No, we have to show them how vulnerable we are so they attack us. We have to let our guards down. At least on the surface."

"It's not a bad idea but I sense something strange in your motives."

Elesis listened to Eve remark then looked straightly at Rena.

"….What? Why are you looking at me like that?"

Rena must have sensed an unhealthy intent because she trailed her words. Elesis showed a clothing in her hand with a grin.

"Please wear this Big Sister Rena."

"…..No."

"It's a swimsuit and there's a lake over there. Ah! And there's beautiful Big Sister Rena over here. There's even a swimsuit that perfectly fits you! Couldn't this be El's providence that you should wear it? Isn't that right, Ignia?"

"…..Ah, well."

Ignia nodded awkwardly. After getting the Fire Priestess's approval, Elesis held out a swimsuit while smiling.

"Here, let's change into these and have some fun, Big Sister Rena."

"…..I refuse."

"You're being stubborn as if I have some ulterior motives. That's not true Big Sister Rena. Didn't I say it already? Demons will attack us only if we show them we're vulnerable. Then shouldn't we disarm and show them how much we're enjoying playing in the lake? Wouldn't those demons waiting for us in that dark underground cavern become enraged and jump out at us?"

"…..You're smiling weirdly."

Rena understood what Elesis was saying but still looked very reluctant. This was because Elesis had face of a mischievous child looking at the most entertaining event in the world.

Then Elesis made an extremely sorrowful expression.

"….Sob, I'm saddened. I prepared such a pretty swimsuit for you but you won't wear it? Are you going to betray my efforts and expectations like this? Was our relationship only physical?"

"Story is heading towards a weird direction, Elesis."

Elesis shook her head at Eve's cold deduction.

"It can't be helped. I'll have to make Eve wear it. Here Eve, wear it!"

"…..I don't expect swimsuit prepared for Rena would fit me."

Eve replied with a slightly hurt tone. Then Elesis spoke while looking at Rena.

"Big Sister Rena, this is a trap. A trap to lure in demons. Could it be that you, a Night Watcher is suspecting my motives?"

"……"

Conflict rose up in Rena's face when she heard the word 'trap'. Elesis murmured with a gloomy face.

"I thought Big Sister Rena would obviously cooperate with my plan. Fine, we'll only do it by ourselves. Eve, Ara, let's go have fun with just us."

"…..We're really just laying a trap right?"

Elesis grinned when Rena asked suspiciously.

Girls had to change into swimsuits so Add got kicked out from the lake.

"….Whatever."

Since he got kicked out anyways, Add lay down and put his hands on his back as he looked up at the sky. Sky had a detestable red color because they were near Lanox.

"This is giving me a headache….."

He understood what the big picture Ignia spoke about was. She was probably trying to create a situation where Add could improve affection points by composing a party only comprised of potential candidates.

"In the end it will be either Eve…. or Ara."

Ara was easy to handle, she gets one point for being easy to convince. She was the easiest candidate just like Eun said.

"What is the reason for putting the girl in that list again?"

Eun poked her head out from Add's jacket. She wasn't in Ara's form anymore and was instead in a small fox form.

"I don't know what you mean by me being obsessed with Eve….. but she cannot be excluded from the list. This is a cold and level-headed conclusion."

"……"

"Stealing the core and going back. Both can be solved with Eve."

This was the logical choice, Add had a good reason for this choice.

"And approaching Ara won't be easy. Eve is being too protective of her right now."

"There's a saying 'if you want to shoot the enemy's general, then aim for his mount first'. Yet boy only intends to go for the mount?"

Add had never heard of such saying but he understood what it meant right away. Eun sitting on top of Add's chest rested her chin on her hands then looked straightly at Add.

"So boy is going to steal the girl's lips by seducing her with sweet words then mercilessly rob her heart? What a horrible man."

"…..I didn't say I decided on Eve."

All he said was it could be Eve or Ara if you narrowed down the candidates. He haven't made any concrete decisions.

Although Eve was the most efficient choice since she could satisfy both requirements of obtaining a way to defeat D and going back.

Add asked causally when Eun didn't respond.

"You're not going to stop me?"

"If that's boy's decision then it can't be helped."

Eun had so far worked hard towards making Add interested in girls other than Eve. Her methods had been improper……but she was giving up rather quickly for working towards that goal for such a long time.

Eun shrugged.

"Even with the power to turn heaven and earth upside down or power to peer into all creation, one cannot do anything about a person's heart."

"….."

Eun spoke poetically then went to hide inside the jacket again as if she was done speaking.

Since there was no one to talk to anymore, Add closed his eyes and thought. Awakening Memory of Time and Space would make him stronger but he didn't know how to activate it…..and it wouldn't give him enough power even if he awoke it.

Then would he be able to beat D if he obtained Eve's core?

"Hmph, when was I sure of anything in the first place….?"

He's been jumping over time and space. So desiring certainty was already lost to him at this point.

Add was making up his mind when sounds footsteps on the grass was heard.

"I didn't expect you to be waiting here so quietly, Add."

"….."

What else was there to do except wait?

Add opened his eyes to see Elesis making a thin smile.

She kicked him out saying they was going to change but her clothes were still the same.

"What is it?"

"Big Sister Rena is changing. I came to keep an eye on you just in case."

"……"

That didn't even sound like a joke but Add quietly raised his upper body. Even if she really came to keep an eye on him…..she didn't need to reveal that fact.

Thus, what Elesis said just now was an excuse.

"So there's something you want to talk about by ourselves."

"Don't you have something you should say to me……"

"If this is about what Ignia did. I asked her to do it."

Add cut off Elesis' words then spoke sharply. Elesis looked surprised. She must have not expected Add to confess so easily.

"I didn't think I'll be able to hide it from you in the first place."

Wasn't it Elesis who figured out Add's identity first amongst the entire Search Party? Even putting that aside, her senses and insight was extraordinary.

'You could guess she noticed just from how the story in the hot springs went…..'

Elesis noticed that Ignia was up to something so she changed the topic in a weird direction.

"Okay, then tell me what you're up to."

"No, you're the one who should be telling me that."

Add stood up calmly but spoke with anger in his voice. It was true that Elesis was difficult to face but he had to clash with her eventually.

And now was that time.

"I asked Ignia to help me with some business related to my universe. Although I have nothing to say back to you if you suspect that I'm plotting something else."

Although Add was secretly acting behind the scenes, he didn't have any shame about what he did.

The kiss part was quite troublesome…. but everything in the end were just means for the result he needed.

"But what excuse do you have for me?"

"Excuse?"

"Don't play dumb with me."

Add threw a rage filled gaze in response to Elesis' calm answer.

"Why are you in such a hurry?"

"….."

"Clash between Lu and Rena, your purpose did make sense but there was no reason to hurry. It hasn't even been that long since they met each other and yet you put them through such a situation."

The excuse Elesis gave at the time for her actions did make sense but Add couldn't accept it….
Even if he could accept it, there was absolutely no reason to hurry.

"Even how you tested me by saying you'll hand me over to that mermaid. There was no need to use such a forceful method if you wanted to test my intentions. Just observing me over time should have been enough."

"……"

This was the conclusion Add arrived at. For some unknown reason, Elesis was being hasty as if something was chasing her.

Elesis responded with a face devoid of smile at Add's question.

"Would saying I did so because I believed in Big Sister Rena's personality….make a good excuse?"

"Don't say something stupid."

All of Elesis' methods that Add had observed so far were actually close to a gamble.

Everything was working out because of Elesis' overwhelming strength and her leadership to keep the El Search Party in check. Normal people wouldn't be able to use the same methods as her.

"Why do you keep rolling a dice? What are you trying to obtain?"

"……."

"Even this situation right now is the same. You're going to have a swimming party to lure in demons? Is that really your intention?"

Add shook his head.

"Wasn't it to create a situation where you could question me about Ignia's actions?"

"It's true that I wanted to ease Big Sister Rena's mind….."

"Stop it already."

Add suddenly felt fatigued and rubbed the back of his neck. Having to question someone so much stronger than him gave him a headache.

Threatening with force suited Add better. He wasn't used to trying to understand others like this so it was making him tired.

"Elesis, I revealed this already but you're our enemy in my universe. I was sick of you because you were so disgustingly strong. ….I had no idea what was on your mind or why you became our enemy."

"……"

"But since you are part of the El Search Party right now and is basically acting as the leader, tell me what's on your mind. I don't know what's making you so desperate but I might be able to help."

Add spoke while looking directly at Elesis.

"I experienced situations and information in the other universe that you don't know about. I might be weaker than you but I might know something you don't know."

"……."

"I'll keep this conversation a secret."

Elesis made a small sigh then grinned.

"You better not break that word."

"Tell me already. Just why are you so…."

Elesis cut off Add's words then started to speak.

"Umm, to put it simply…."

It must have been something difficult to say because Elesis hesitated despite opening her mouth. Add felt anxious but kept patient. This was a good chance to know what kind of circumstances were driving Elesis' reckless actions.

"It's because I might get killed."

"……"

Just who could kill this girl? Wouldn't even diseases get scared of her and run away?

Add looked at Elesis confusedly but her expression was serious. She didn't look like she was joking so Add replied seriously as well.

"Killed? By who?"

"This final battle in the Grand Cavern, there will be many variables but there's a high chance I'll get done in by Scar. My chances of surviving this battle is probably less than 30%."

"….."

There's only 30% chance for Elesis to survive? This was unbelievable but Elesis wasn't joking.

"Yes, I was in a hurry. I wanted everyone to accept Lu and Ciel as comrades quickly….so we can enter the battle in the best shape possible. It's not like I want to die… but I had to add those two to supplement our strength just in case there were losses."

"……"

"Even though I knew doing this would increase the burden on Big Sister Rena's mind."

Elesis had a dark expression but her voice remained calm. She probably had never revealed these thoughts to anyone, even to Rena or her own brother Elsword.

Add understood this then gasped thinly.

"You……"

"It will drop our morale if we talked about our losses even before we started fighting….. But I'm in a position where I have to think about it. El Search Party is the strongest group in Elrios at the moment to face the demons after all."

"……."

Elesis continued to speak without wavering.

"I wanted to organize things much as I could since chances of me dying in this fight was too high. That's why it must have looked like I was being hasty."

"……Is Scar really that powerful?"

"Yes. He almost got me last time and he would have become even stronger now. I honestly cannot grantee I'll be able to beat him."

Elesis' expression was dark. Her usual cheerfulness or mischievousness was nowhere to be seen.

"No, never mind not being able to grantee a victory…. If Scar and I fought one on one, my chances of survival probably won't even be 20%."

"Then you could….."

"But we must stop the demon god's resurrection. And others might get sacrificed instead if I don't face Scar myself. I'll at least… try to take him down with me."

Add could tell Elesis came to this conclusion after much deliberation.

Elesis' reckless actions became more understandable now. Her hasty way of handling things must have been based off her conclusion that she won't survive the battle with the demons.

"Elesis, how old are you again?"

"Nineteen….. Ah, isn't it rude to ask something like that?"

Elesis answered then became upset for some reason. At her answer, Add looked over Elesis from her feet to head.

Elesis must have gotten a strange thought because she took a step back.

"…..You're not thinking something rude right?"

"It's nothing like that so be quiet for a second."

It never crossed Add's mind since he was always so overwhelmed by Elesis…..but Elesis wasn't even twenty years old and yet was standing as a vanguard for the battle that will decide the future of Elrios.

Even while knowing she won't survive that battle.

Add tightened the grip on his fist without realizing. Feelings that he couldn't distinguish rose up and his mouth opened on its own.

"You deprived the chance for Rena and Lu to reconcile properly."

"……"

"If you know Rena then I know Rena as well. Even though her personality changed like that…. they will certainly understand each other with some time. But you left the scene knowing that they will have a huge fight as if you were rolling a dice."

"Yes."

Elesis must have lots of words to say for her defense.

Like not wanting to fight while it was uncertain if Rena, Eve, Lu and Ciel would cooperate with each other, or that it couldn't be helped because she didn't know what might happen after she died.

But Elesis calmly admitted she was wrong.

"What irritates me the most is….."

Add paused before he spoke. He never imagined a day would come when he would say something like this.

To think he was going to say something he won't ever say even in his dreams.

"Why don't you believe in others?"

"…..What?"

Elesis looked surprised but Add ignored her best he could. His ears would be red if he were to look in the mirror right now.

But Add couldn't stop the words he already started to speak. These feelings were bursting out from within him.

"Scar is stronger than you? So what? Didn't we El Search Party always fight against demons stronger than us? It was so at least in my universe."

"….."

"You were recklessly trying to tidy things up while hiding your feelings because you feared Scar….? You were afraid you couldn't defeat Scar by yourself? Don't make me laugh……"

It wasn't like he didn't understand how Elesis felt. No…. he knew that feeling the best across all universes.

This was because Add had also fought recklessly up till now by turning back time. Even now he was fighting to get the result he wanted.

Add raised his head and glared at Elesis. Her eyes were wide open and she had an blank expression. She must have not imagined Add out of all people would say something like this.

Yes, even Add had never imagined it himself. But everything was already in motion.

"I'll tell you a phrase that was popular in my universe. If you can't win this time…. you just have to win next time!"

"What?"

"This is how everyone fought."

If you can't win this time then you just have to win next time. Suppress your shame of defeat and collect yourself for the next fight.

Everyone believed in this and bought Add the time to escape from D.

"Next time? Such thing is….."

"I know. If that demon god resurrection is dangerous as you say then it should be stopped now. So….."

Add conveyed the words that came directly from his heart.

"If you can't win by yourself then fight together."

"……"

Elesis' methods weren't completely wrong since the battle against powerful enemies was approaching. Add used time travel so far to create a result where no one in the El Search Party was killed, but Elesis couldn't do this.

Telling Elesis to relax since Add can time travel was one way. But that would unnecessarily complicate the story. This was the only way to convince Elesis without revealing that.

Believe in others and fight.

"Isn't that what stupidly soft El Search Party is?"

Add raised up his tightly held fists.

"Since you're extremely strong you must have never felt the need to borrow other people's strength, but that's wrong. If Scar is that powerful, then think about winning with help from others. Why are you only thinking about an ending where you fight all by yourself?"

"……."

"Your chance of survival is only 30%? Don't make me laugh. Do you think I'll let that happen? Seeing someone that doesn't think about living irritates me the most!"

Add could jump across time or even universes to save someone precious to him. He could understand feelings of people that did anything possible to save people precious to them. He was even willing to lend them his hand long as it didn't get in the way of his goals.

In contrast, it enraged him to see someone like this who lacked the will to live. Add shouted as he stretched out his fist towards Elesis.

"Stop saying stupid things and live with all you got!! Think about how you'll survive together with everyone else!!"

"….."

Elesis who was listening quietly suddenly burst out laughing. It felt awkward for Add to withdraw his fist now.

Just when Add's face was becoming red….. Elesis shook her head then slightly met Add's fist with her own.

"Yes, you're right. I was being too closed-minded. Thank you for the great advice, Add."

"……"

Add wanted to hide somewhere from embarrassment. He just wanted to end this conversation now that he lost all the passion from before. But Elesis wasn't done talking.

She looked far away with a sentimental expression.

"I must have gotten some bad thoughts too after watching….the Velder Kingdom's destruction. That's right, I should be thinking about how to survive together with everyone else. I can't be thinking about dying. I still have to protect Elsword after all….."

"……"

Can I stop doing this now since she's talking by herself? Add thought this as he carefully tried to withdraw his fist but Elesis' fist followed his as if attached to a magnet.

"What's wrong Add? Weren't you trying to convey your passionate heart to me?"

"That wasn't my intention."

When Add angrily pulled his arm behind his back, Elesis didn't say anything more and withdrew her arm. She was smiling but it didn't look like she was going to tease him anymore.

"Thank you Add, things have been so hectic that I've forgotten. We're the El Search Party….."

"……If you understood then don't do anything weird anymore."

"Yes, I should also apologize to Big Sister Rena and Lu."

Elesis said this then turned around with hands behind her back. She then turned her head back to look at Add.

"Come to think of it, you must have been pretty upset at what I said to Seirena. You're not going to bring that up?"

"……."

It did upset him a lot at the time but her reason was understandable…..and it was somewhat bothersome to bring it up himself so he kept silent.

Elesis lowered her head then apologized when Add stayed quiet.

"I'm sorry Add. I wasn't thinking correctly. We're comrades even if universes are different…. I shouldn't have doubted you."

"……It was a necessary process."

It also felt awkward to receive this apology since he was ultimately aiming for Eve's core. Elesis spoke quietly when Add tried to move on.

"As a sign of apology, I want to help with what you're trying to do. Can I help you together with Ignia?"

"….."

Will everything be solved easily if he asked her for a kiss here? Add pondered for a moment but quickly shook his head.

"It's already in progress. I don't need any more help. Just don't get in the way even if it catches your eyes."

"Alright, just tell me if there's anything I can do to help."

Elesis said this them smiled again. It was a refreshing smile as if she was eased from a burden.

"Thank you for scolding me from the bottom of your heart, Add."

"…..Others would have changed into swimsuits already. Go ahead."

Elesis stared at Add quietly for a moment then walked away when Add turned his head away to avoid her. Add sighed when Elesis' footsteps became further.

It was good that Elesis became friendly towards him…. but he didn't know if it was to the point where request for a kiss would work.

"No, in the first place….."

How much affection points do you need for it to be 'kiss switch, on!'? And how do you make it a situation where kissing won't bring about any side effects?

As Add thought, Eun spoke from inside the jacket.

"I'm surprised at boy's skills. Cooking Elesis like that in one go."

"We're excluding Elesis anyways….."

It seemed Add did buy some affection from Elesis although unintentionally…… But he wasn't sure if it was a switch-on state. Not only that, but Elsword will react if he approached Elesis.

"That kid is seriously nothing but trouble……"

Raising Elesis' affection points was pointless in the end because of Elsword. Finding a way to defeat D, and getting a kiss to go back was important…. But the El Search Party coming out of battle in the Grand Cavern without losses was important as well.

He had to refrain from doing something that will cause disturbances or fractures within the El Search Party.

"I'm seriously……"

Soft hearted too. He couldn't deny that he had a feeling of not wanting to see anyone in this universe's El Search Party get killed as well.

Add was muttering when Eun said something strange from within the jacket.

"To think boy would tell someone to believe in others and fight. I honestly would have never imagined."

"……I wasn't serious."

That's what he said as an excuse since he couldn't tell Elesis that he could stop the result she feared by turning back time. Add was trying to change the topic when he heard footsteps.

Ignia was approaching. There must have been not enough swimsuits because she was wearing her usual clothes.

"Elesis came from this direction. Did she say anything?"

"It was just an idle conversation. Don't mind it."

Ignia nodded then stated her business.

"I didn't form teams like this for no reason. I'm bit worried about Elesis…. but it's time to act, Add."

"……"

I have a bad feeling about this. Add thought as Ignia made a fake cough once then announced with a confident voice.

"Operation, Oops! My hands slipped!!"

"….."

Why does it sound like an operation that would break his hand?

Add reluctantly followed Ignia back to the lake.

"So what's your exact plan?"

"First of all, this might be difficult for you to hear….."

Ignia walking at the front glanced back and spoke.

"I don't think you're that attractive as a man."

"……"

Ignia stopped her steps then tilted her head.

"You're not that tall or muscular. I guess only your proportions and face is alright."

"…..I can't do anything about that."

Add had never been interested in his and other people's appearances. He had his hands full with researches so there was no time to spare for things like body building. He wasn't a type that battled physically in the first place….. Never mind Elesis, Add would be beaten by even Ara or Rena in physical strength.

…..No, Add was most likely weakest in the group in terms of physical strength. Could he say he was stronger than Lu who looked the youngest?

Add was looking back on himself when Ignia spoke blatantly.

"Raven and Ciel looks very attractive from perspective of girls. No words are needed for Raven and Ciel looks very manly as well."

"…..Is it the chest after all?"

Is it because I have a smaller chest? So do men need big chests too?

Add bit his lips in frustration after remembering what happened in the men's bath. To think this ridiculous reason would come back to haunt him now.

Should he pay more attention to his physique if he gets some time later?

"Chest…..? Ah, well."

Ignia peered at Add's chest then smiled briskly.

"You still have a future. Cheer up!!"

"…..Drop the fake consolation. So you're saying I lack manliness because of my physical appearance?"

Appearance was important for creatures to buy affection of member of the other sex. The key point was how they appealed.

"In ecosystems, males tend to appeal how superior they are when trying to win over a female. So what you're saying is I lack appeal as a male right now so supplementing that part should be

advantageous in raising affection points of the girl members. Peacocks use their fancy tail feathers and cicadas use loudness of their cries to appeal their superiority….."

"……"

Add analyzed scientifically without noticing that Ignia was staring at him with a disgusted expression.

"Thus, I just have to figure out how humans males can appeal to females then supplement that part. So how should I do that Ignia? Tell me your opinion as a human female."

"…..Chest?"

"I can't do anything about that right now. There's no time to develop a drug that increases chest size. And even if I do, it won't show any effect in short term."

"Does that mean it can be effective in long term?!"

Add nodded cleanly when Ignia asked in surprise.

"My major is Nasods and mechanics…..but I know some biology as well. I've refined anesthetics couple times before. Human body is comprised of mostly protein and fat. If you wanted to increase your chest size you just have to attach some muscles. I can develop a steroid for that."

"…..Um, h-how about just supplementing with just fat and not muscles?"

"What I mentioned right now was for males only. To apply it to females….."

Add was answering readily to the student's(?) question then his gaze coincidentally stopped at around Ignia's chest. Ignia hastily waved her arms from Add's gaze.

"Don't say it! Don't say it!"

"…..I think that's sufficient for your age."

"I told you not to say it!"

Add skipped to the next topic when flames started to form in Ignia's hand.

"Anyways, taking fat out of certain body part is possible. I tried constructing a theory about it out of curiosity before. If there's a plus then there's a minus as well so oppositely, it should be possible to supplement fat in certain body parts as well."

"…..R-really?"

"But biology isn't my speciality after all and there's a high chance there will be side-effects. This is why I don't like biology….. Mechanics is simple and beautiful because everything fits perfectly, but in biology there's too many unforeseeable consequences."

Add was enjoying talking about his speciality but stopped after realizing he wasted too much time.

Ignia was slightly peering down at her chest…. But Add ignored her.

"Okay. I understand I lack manliness in the outer appearance side of things. There's nothing I can do about that right now so I'll make up for that from other angle."

"Hmm……."

"So what's the plan you came up with? You wouldn't have evaluated my appearance for no reason. You must have something in mind."

Operation, Oops my hands slipped. Add didn't like how it sounded but Ignia could have thought of something useful since she was a priestess.

Ignia replied to Add's hopeful question.

"This might sound cruel but you lack appeal as a man. Even though I divided the teams like this….. there's totally no air of anyone being conscious of you as a man."

"So you were behind it after all. How did you convince Elesis and Rena?"

"I told them I had a prophetic dream. I'm a priestess after all."

Ignia spoke as if it was an easy task. Add asked in surprise.

"Prophetic dream? Is such a thing possible?"

"Of course not. If I could…. I wouldn't have lost those two."

"….."

When Add kept silent, Ignia unnaturally brightened the tone of her voice.

"Anyways, there's not much air of anyone being conscious of you even though I divided the teams like this. So you'll have to make them be conscious of you as a man while we're playing in the water here. It will all depend on your appeal after that."

"Make them be conscious of me as a man…."

It hurt Add's pride but according to Ignia's observation, Add wasn't even being accepted as a man to girls of the Search Party. Well…. it did make sense. It was true that Raven and Ciel looked much more manly even in Add's perspective.

If you considered only manliness…. wouldn't even Elsword be better than him?

Ignia spoke to console Add when he let out a tragic sigh.

"Well you have a pretty face so it's fine. Wouldn't you look more manly when you grow up? Although the pretty impression is stronger right now….."

"So what do you want me to do precisely?"

"….."

Ignia was silent for a while then wordlessly raised up her thumb.

There was a bad feeling about this. Ignia spoke seriously.

"Cause an accident."

"…..Denied."

"Didn't you say you have to finish this until we settle things with Scar? Go cause an accident."

Accident while playing in the water? He didn't want to hear the details too much. But Ignia was being serious.

"There's not much time. Let's go with My Hand Slipped!"

"…..Just what is that? You want me to take off a girl's swimsuit saying that it was an accident or something?"

"H-how could you say something like that……!"

Ignia raised a flame in her hand as if trying to threaten Add then suddenly covered her mouth and thought.

"….Yea, that's good. Do it! Isn't there that old story? One about woodcutter stealing a celestial maiden's robes then marrying her. Although it's a swimsuit this time!"

"I refuse……"

Because Ignia grew up as a priestess, she didn't seem to be too bright in romantic affairs either. She does have general curiosity and basic tastes about the topic but things became a mess when she went in details.

She was still better than completely clueless Add but her ideas weren't completely reliable.

Well, was it too much to ask from someone with no romantic experience after all?

"Didn't you say you were already prepared? I know this whole thing is irrational…. But wouldn't it work out somehow?"

"Even nonexistent affection points will get shaved off if I do that."

That was basically becoming a criminal. Wouldn't it be stranger if girls didn't get enraged? ……Although he did get caught up in similar situations in the past thanks to Eun.

"Forget about this. What was your original plan?"

"Event where you 'accidentally' make the target moderately sprain their ankle then carrying them in your arm?"

"……"

"Man who carries an injured woman dearly in his arms. Wouldn't it be a chance to make them see you in a different light? Other girls will think highly of you too."

Add answered in a monotone voice when Ignia spoke in a lively tone like a dreaming girl.

"I get what you're saying. But…..I don't have enough strength in my arms to do that."

"……"

Sorry, I don't have enough arm strength to carry a single frail girl to a safe place. If that was possible I wouldn't be worrying about my lack of manliness in the first place.

"Although it would be possible if I used the Dynamos."

Ignia scratched her head at Add's honest confession.

"Fine, then let's go with Oops My Hand Slipped 2 that you suggested. Say it was an accident then…!"

"I told you I refuse to do that. Anyways, I'll handle this somehow by myself so you go back first."

"…..Well fine. Just tell me if I can help you with something."

Ignia readily nodded then went away. Add slightly pressed on his jacket when Ignia couldn't be seen anymore.

Then Eun poked her head out as if she had been waiting.

"That was quite an entertaining conversation. I had trouble keeping myself from joining in."

"What do you think about Ignia's indication?"

There was no choice but to agree with the observation that girls weren't conscious of Add as a man.

"It does make sense. Girls of the Search Party all packs a serious punch….. and aren't they stronger than the boy? It should be impossible to appeal with combat skills."

"…..As I thought."

It was impossible to appeal manliness with his outer appearance. Having them see him in a new light by showing off combat skills was no good either.

Add wasn't a peacock nor cicada. He didn't have fancy tail feathers or loud cries to seduce someone.

Add walked forward as he fixed his jacket.

"….So the answer is Eve."

"Boy."

"Ara might be easy to approach like you said. But I lack elements that I can appeal to her. I need a same topic of interest to close the distance between my target but Ara and I don't have anything like that. Ara uses spear arts for combat but I have zero physical combat skills."

This evaluation was more like self-reprimanding but Eun didn't say anything as if she accepted. It was true that Ara was easy to talk to and deceive.

But Eve was on guard and being protective of her right now.

"But Eve is different. There's a same topic of interest between us called Nasods and engineering. Even if Eve is treating me coldly, it's better to have an element where we can have an argument about. Raising each other's voices in a heated scientific argument should be better than having no conversation at all."

"…..When did boy make that kind of judgement?"

"Just now."

He just thought of it while talking with Ignia.

The reason peacocks spread their tail feathers? That's to appeal to members of the other sex. That meant fancy feathers of a male peacock was an appealing element to female peacocks.

"Knowledge is all I've got in the end. Only way I can appeal how I'm different from other men is engineering."

"……."

Since Add was an engineer, only candidate he can improve his relationship with within short period of time was Eve who had the same topic of interest as him.

Eun didn't complain further and hopped down.

"It can't be helped if that's what boy wishes. Change into a swimsuit then come after 5 minutes."

"What?"

Eun didn't explain herself and quickly dashed off.

Add assumed Eun had something in her mind so he arrived at the lake after 5 minutes. Rena, Elesis, Eve and Ara had already changed into their swimsuits.

Elesis and Rena were swimming across the lake as if they were having a race.

"So laid back….."

They were going to battle Scar tomorrow…. Just what kind of farce was this? El Search Party was always naïve but this was the first time he saw something so ridiculous.

Eve spoke while glancing back after noticing Add had arrived late.

"You're late, useless. Demons might attack so be on your guard."

"Mr.Add, water here is very clear. Let's go in quickly."

Ara in her swimsuit saw Add too and waved her hand.

"I cannot swim….."

Add was about to answer but his gaze got stuck on Ara's head. Fox ears on top of her white hair, she had red eyes and three tails. Ara gave a cute wink when Add kept staring at her numbly.

……It wasn't Ara. It was Eun.

When Add kept standing numbly, Eun stuck close beside Add then spoke brightly.

"Then let's walk together with three of us. View here is very nice, Mr.Add!"

"……."

Eun had imitated Ara's way of speaking before but she had never seriously disguised herself as Ara like this before. Just as her motives were being put into question, Eun waved her hand towards Eve.

"Come here too Ms.Eve. Let's all be friendly."

"…..It can't be helped."

Eve reluctantly held Add's hand. As Add was being startled by this unexpected development, Eun started to walk forward as if nothing was wrong.

Eun could imitate Ara's appearance…. And she was trying to make use of that to fool Eve.

Add decided to follow along for now.

How Eun was disguising as Ara to guide Eve's actions was confirmed.

Eve was walking hand-to-hand with Add as if she was only doing so because Ara was.

Game board was set. The problem was how to improve their relationship a step further.

Add's original plan was to use his Nasod related knowledge to buy Eve's interest then create a mood where they can have a debate, thus increasing the number of communications between them. Understanding each other through a fired-up debate then seeing each other in a new light at least just a little…. This kind of methodical plan of his was already set.

But this kind of walking along the lake while holding hands wasn't in his plans. It was uncomfortable because it made his heart beat strangely and made him nervous.

Eve was walking wordlessly while just looking forward.

When the silence between three of them continued, Ara(disguised Eun) started a conversation.

"Would everything be alright on Mr.Elsword's side?"

"Even if Elsword makes a mistake Aisha will correct it. There's also Raven so there shouldn't be any big problems."

Eve gave a short answer then looked at Add discretely.

"Don't stay quiet and say something. Ara is getting bored."

"I'm fine Ms.Eve. Just walking together like this is fun for me."

"No, Ara. Although I only know from data, human males have to do their best for human females in this situation. It's rude otherwise. I won't accept it even if you're okay with it."

At Eve's stern attitude Ara(Eun) made a bitter smile then changed the topic.

"Come to think of it, this place is quite wide."

"It looks like a basin created between cliffs. Since there's a lake there must be a passage where water is flowing in. This place must have been created from radical changes in terrain. Lanox seems to have many volcanic activities so that must be the reason."

Add who was keeping quiet between the two girls opened his mouth. This was his specialty.

Eve must have been a bit surprised at Add's explanation because she looked around. Then she winced from Add's gaze and pretended to not have seen anything.

Add did a terrain analysis beforehand just in case and it came in handy in this situation. Finally getting the chance to speak, Add continued the conversation.

"So we're supposed to arrive at the Grand Cavern tomorrow….. It's final battle against the demons. Are you ready?"

"Of course. We must not let the demon god resurrect!"

"I can handle myself. But Add….."

Eve suddenly changed the tone of her voice.

"Did you find a clue to defeating D?"

"……."

He couldn't answer that it was her core. Eve who had no idea what Add's silence meant spoke calmly.

"After defeating Scar, we'll prepare for our battle against the dragon. But you're not from our universe so you should have things to take care of in your own universe. I understand your motives of trying to find a way while helping us on this side, but you can't afford to stay here too long. Am I right?"

"……"

"You must go back to fix the problems in your universe. We'll handle our universe's problems by ourselves."

She was absolutely correct. Add agreed as well.

"Yes. I'm thinking about going back after business in Lanox. It will be bad if I stayed here too long. And…."

Add spoke calmly while suppressing his feelings.

"I already found a way to defeat D."

"Really? That's really great, Mr.Add!"

Ara, no Eun exclaimed even though she knew that Add was lying. But Eve who didn't know asked.

"I'd like to know what that is. We might be able to use it in our battle with the dragon."

"It's something only I can do."

"I can just order original slightly useless Add who will come back when you leave.."

So I'm a useless Add and the one who was originally here was a slightly useless Add? Add was about to retort but then asked a question out of sudden curiosity.

"Come to think of it. What kind of person was original Add from this universe?"

"He was overly fastidious and slightly useless researcher. I don't want to talk about him too much."

Original Add must have been quite competent. Add felt bitter for some reason as he asked.

"Was there any other traits?"

"What do you mean?"

At Eve's calm question, Add focused his gaze on the core on Eve's forehead. Come to think of it, this was strange.

Why was Eve still unharmed?

It didn't mean it was wrong for her to be unharmed…. But despite some discrepancies in personalities and abilities, Add B and him seemed like a same person at the base.

Just like how Ara was Ara and Eve was Eve, Add was Add as well.

Then Add B would have obviously went after Eve's core since he needed the technology to go back to the past and become stronger. You had to say there was some other reason for Eve being unharmed despite D not existing here.

Add was thinking when Eve spoke stiffly.

"Recalling it now, slightly useless Add did say he time traveled to here from the past."

"……"

You imbecile.

Eve added as Add's head became numb from what he just heard and stared blankly into space.

"Although I ignored him since it was gibberish like always."

"He didn't tell me exactly but he must have had a very difficult time in the past." Eun spoke as if she knew what Eve was talking about.

"…..Ah, is that so?"

It didn't sound like he kept it a secret at all. He basically announced, 'hey everyone I came from the past!'.

Add suppressed the feeling of wanting to twist Add B's mouth off as he forced himself to smile.

"Kukukuk, I-I didn't know there was a weirdo like that."

"Although that's you."

Eve spoke sharply then shook her head soon after.

"He is you but not you at the same time. Slightly useless Add and very useless Add…. But it still doesn't change the fact that you are both useless."

"Anyways, I can't tell you about…..how to defeat D. I cannot tell you since it's related to our universe."

"But we won't ever cross to your universe anyways. I don't see any problem with you telling me."

Eve was being unexpectedly persistent. Fight against the dragon won't be easy so she must want to prepare much as possible.

Add agreed with her wholeheartedly but shook his head.

"It's a secret. I cannot tell you no matter what."

" 'Eve, you won't be able to accept me if I hold any secrets against you.' That's what slightly useless you who's not you said."

"……"

Was he a blabbermouth? Why didn't he just confess that he was after her core as well?

"I still can't say it."

"Ms.Eve, Mr.Add seems troubled. You should stop……"

"……Fine."

Eve stopped her persistent attitude then closed her mouth when Ara dissuaded her. She reacted quite softly to Ara(Eun). He had to make good use of this……

Add was thinking this when Ara suddenly hugged his arm and stuck close to his side.

"We have to fight tomorrow so let's relax and play today."

"……"

Add understood her intention but he wanted to avoid this type of excessive physical contact. Most of all, since Ara was in her swimsuit attire, 'that' was touching his arm…….

Eun spoke in a prissy tone without caring about Add's troubles.

"Mr.Add, do you not like being with me like this?"

"……"

Eve was glaring at Add with an ever so cold gaze. One who approached him first was Ara but Eve didn't seem like she cared.

"Ms.Eve. Let's all be friendly. Friendly."

"…..I don't understand what you mean."

Eve stuck close to Add's opposite arm while sighing.

Add's face heated up and turned red when Ara and Eve stuck close to him from both sides. He also felt annoyed at himself at the same time. He was frustrated at himself for not being able to keep his cool in this situation.

Should he just play along with them to achieve his goal?

"Kukukuk….."

Although Eun's bold actions got on his nerves a bit, shouldn't he be glad that Eun was creating opportunities for him?

That's what he thought but he couldn't stop his face from turning red.

He wanted to give up everything and run away right now. Falling into a situation that he couldn't control was too unfamiliar and scary. It felt like sky diving without Dynamos.

"…..This is why I hate biology."

There were too many uncontrollable variables. Add himself was also uncontrollable in this case.

He knew he had to use this chance to get something out of Eve…. But his body couldn't move.

Damn biology, mechanics for the win, engineering is the king of all studies.

Add was muttering when Eve abruptly started to be on guard.

"Ara, no… are you Eun?"

"Hmm? What are you saying Ms.Eve?"

"Ms.Eve, Let's all be friendly."

".....I don't understand what you mean."

Eun's personality didn't always show even when Ara was in Celestial Fox state. Eve must have known this and wasn't guarded at first but Eun must have overstepped her boundaries.

Eve unhanded her arms holding Add despite Eun's denial.

"I thought I told you not to do whatever you want with Ara's body."

"….Hmm."

Eun was about to say something while narrowing her eyes……

Wrrrrr!!

Then a shockwave occurred as a dark hole opened in the sky. Succubi and Incubi poured out from the dimension gate.

Rena and Elesis must have anticipated this beforehand because they were looking up with sharp gazes. Eve also completely switched into battle mode but they were all unarmed because they had been taking a break.

No matter how strong the El Search Party was, taking care of hundreds of demons unarmed was…..

"Here, everyone catch!!"

Then with a shout from Ignia who had been absent, a spear, sword and a great sword flew in. Everyone caught their weapons that came flying towards them.

This was a plan to lure in demons in the first place. Ignia had been on standby at a hidden place waiting to hand over the Search Party's weapons.

Elesis still in her swimsuit and now carrying her sword shouted with a grin.

"Alright, then let's clean them all up!"

It was a declaration of victory filled with confidence despite hundreds of demons in front of them.

Late night when everyone was asleep.

Add and the other El Search Party members were resting in a secluded area in the cave. They will arrive at the Grand Cavern tomorrow. It will the final battle against demons.

"….."

Add confirmed that everyone was asleep then slowly got up. Add looked at the campfire for a moment then sighed as he scratched his head.

Battle this afternoon was overly bland. Only small fries appeared and they were annihilated by the El Search Party with Elesis and Rena in the lead. It was a complete victory without anyone having even a strand of their hair harmed. Long as this El Search Party stuck together, they should be able to win no matter how strong of a demon Karis and Scar were.

And Add can change the result with time travel otherwise.

"…..I'm not strong enough."

Add's original plan was to take advantage of the chaos of the battle to steal Eve's lips and her core.

But the El Search Party was much stronger than he expected.

"Kukukuk….."

To think he'd be in a pinch now because the Search Party was too strong. Add let out an empty laugh as he shook his head. Ignia was being cooperative right now but he couldn't expect her to stay as his ally after he stole Eve's core.

No, the entire El Search Party becomes his enemy soon as he steals Eve's core.

Wasn't it obvious? They won't forgive someone who killed their comrade.

"……This is unexpected."

Add smiled bitterly as he looked up. He didn't like how low the cave ceiling was.

Add had been certain that it was a piece of cake for him to steal Eve's core in the original universe's 5 member El Search Party.

Only danger was Rena but he was confident that he will be successful if he used the element of surprise.

Of course, the difficulty did go up after Eve and Ara awakened to Memory of Time and Space and Chung joined……

"….."

But each individual in this El Search Party had much superior skills. Add probably couldn't beat anyone if he were to fight them 1 on 1.

He thought maybe attacking Eve while the team was divided like this would be better…. But he didn't obtain the return condition called the kiss yet.

'Should I just turn back time? Go back and raise Eve's affection points step by step?'

Although he didn't know how to increase a lot of affection points at once, he might get the hang of it if he tried it over and over again. Add was struggling to figure out an answer when he sensed someone wake up.

Eve who had been sleeping with Ara hugging each other raised her upper body then turned to look at Add.

"I thought there was a ghost wandering around but it was just you, useless."

"……There's no such thing as ghosts."

"So there aren't any in that universe?"

"……"

Does that mean they exist in here? Add suddenly felt the chills but didn't let it show and asked.

"Why did you wake up? What do you want?"

"Nasods don't need to sleep."

"You can sleep if you want but you don't have to right?"

"….."

Add let out a small laugh when Eve paused with a surprised expression. He was a Nasod Researcher so this was basic of basics.

"Come sit beside me if you have something to say."

Well, he might make some progress while talking to her. When Add made a room for her, Eve quietly sat beside him.

There was only sound of campfire burning, sound of water drops falling somewhere.

Add and Eve sat side by side amongst the harmony made by fire and water. Eve revealed her intentions after a long silence.

"My recent attitude might have been bit harsh. I apologize Add."

"I won't understand if you say it vaguely like that. Because I'm useless."

"……."

Add had an idea what Eve was trying to say but he answered sarcastically on purpose. Eve must have not expected this kind of sharp response so she looked at Add with a startled expression.

It was more entertaining reaction than he thought. Actually, continuing to call Add useless every chance she got already showed that Eve's reactions were full of emotions.

This Eve expressed her emotions much more openly than Eve that Add knew. This was intriguing.

"I see. I should explain more in depth so it's easier for you who's useless to understand. Although how you're useless is true, I might have hurt you somehow by keep mentioning it. I might have been careless in this regard."

"….."

Wasn't this a provocation rather than an apology? Add became bewildered as he looked at Eve but Eve pompously finished her apology(?).

"I'll be careful from now on, Add."

"You don't need to. It's true that I'm weak. I got nothing to say in response if I hear that I'm useless. It's correct to struggle in order to improve if you don't have the skills. You shouldn't care about ways or means to get stronger if you're desperate."

Well, Add wasn't particularly offended from Eve keep saying he was useless.

Because it was true…..and being conscious of it wasn't something bad.

Add was determined to do anything necessary to achieve his goals and became stronger because of it. Since he needed even more strength to defeat D, realizing his strength was lacking was important.

"What you said was motivational."

Add took a glance at Eve's core. Everything will be solved easily if he could just obtain that.

Of course, it wasn't like he instantly became stronger like magic when he obtained it…….

"….No, I seemed to have acted too harshly so I was reflecting on my actions."

Add lowered his gaze from the core after hearing Eve's words. Eve who was hugging her knees spoke while looking at the campfire.

"I determined you were pulling a prank on Ara so I overreacted. I'll admit it. Although I won't apologize."

"Really?"

Add wasn't too surprised because he had expected these words from Eve.

"Ara pestered me to apologize but I won't apologize for this. I'll act the same way even if I can turn back time."

So she admits she went overboard but she doesn't regret it or will apologize. Add snickered at her rigid reaction.

Eve must have interpreted this as mockery because her eyes became cold.

"If you're really serious about Ara then treat her more preciously."

"You must have some weird imagination……. But I don't have any particular feelings towards Ara."

"Aren't you confusing your emotions from that universe?"

Eve's words were compressed but Add knew what she meant instantly.

She was asking if Add was confusing feelings he had for Ara in the other universe with Ara from this universe. Add shook his head.

"Both here and there, I'm not particularly interested in that idiot."

"Not idiot, she's Ara."

Eve warned then asked as if she couldn't understand.

"I judge that Ara is an attractive human female. Of course, Rena and Elesis are attractive as well but from human male's perspective, isn't Ara someone who you'd like to protect and be together with?"

"…..So what are you telling me to do?"

Add's compressed words meant 'So are you telling me to be interested in Ara or not? You misunderstood me for being interested in her then became wary on your own'.

Eve understood what Add said right away as well and retorted.

"If you want to be together with Ara, you must be cautious, careful, mannerly, situational, prudent, patient, delicate and gentle."

"……."

Just how many precautions were there? How should he describe this situation…..? Mother-in-law saying 'a man like you isn't good enough for my daughter~'?

Eve strongly finished her words.

"That's the minimum requirement."

"Why do I need your permission to interact with Ara?"

"Then will you take Elesis' examination instead? I already consulted this with Elesis."

…..Do you want to fight a bear or a tiger? Add didn't understand why Eve was giving him this kind of choice. When Add looked confused, Eve warned stiffly.

"Ara doesn't know about this. I won't forgive you if you tell her."

"I don't intend to. Although I don't understand why you're so protective of Ara……"

"It's natural for human males and females to meet each other. Ara trusts in other people too much so I'm concerning myself with her."

Well although this was bit outrageous…..was Eve the only one who could take care of Ara by the elimination rule? Rena would normally be in charge of something like this but her personality changed like that…..and it was not something you'd leave to a guy so Eve was right person for the job in the end.

"I don't know too much about this matter but I'm planning to try my best within my knowledge."

"Like I said, what's the reason for……"

"Because she's my comrade."

Eve said this proudly then looked sideways at Add.

"It's obvious to be concerned about a comrade you've been together with all this time. Wasn't it like this in your universe as well?"

"That's….."

Add unknowingly put strength in his fists.

Scene of the El Search Party standing against D to buy Add time to escape. He could recall the image of their backs whenever he closed his eyes.

He probably won't forget that scene for the rest of his life.

Add was clenching his teeth….then a small sensation touched the top of his fist. Add looked in surprise to see that it was Eve's hand.

Eve who put her hand on top of Add's spoke calmly while only looking forward.

"I won't ask what kind of hardship and worries there were in your universe. So you don't have to say it."

"……"

"You're our comrade too long as you're here. Me and anyone else here will fully support you in defeating D and returning to your universe."

Add's face was empty for a moment then he unknowingly frowned.

"You're all too soft."

"That might be true."

A calm answer from Eve.

"….Things in this universe should already be difficult enough but you're saying you'll also care about me who came from a different universe? You're all seriously too soft."

"Even though useless, you're still our comrade. We can give you a hand."

"I'm….."

Nothing like a comrade. Add swallowed the words he was about to say. He became emotional without realizing.

Long silence started again. But the small hand on top of Add's fist didn't move.

"What if….."

At the end of the silence, Add spoke up without realizing. There was a thought that he shouldn't be doing this, but an excuse that he could just turn this back with time travel came to his mind first.

"The one I long for is you?"

"……"

He said it. Eve turned to look. She was wordless but it was certain that she was surprised.

It already started. Add let out the words inside his heart.

Feelings that have been trapped inside all this time, across time and universes, slowly flowed out.

"Over countless fights, across time and even across universes…..what if the one I longed for and was obsessed about is you?"

"…..I don't understand what you're saying."

"Of course you wouldn't know. I'm not saying this to you….. No, no one would ever know."

Add sighed then slowly stretched out his hand. Eve only blinked and didn't evade even though she saw Add's hand coming close to her.

Add chuckled in a low voice as he slowly stroked Eve's face.

"Kukukuk, seriously….."

This Eve wasn't Eve he knew, and nothing would change even if this was Eve he knew.

For Add, Eve was a bridge, a method to go back to the past, a research material at best.

What kind of value, what kind of feelings was he supposed to give to her? Add was proud of his Dynamos….Yes, he might have an attachment towards it.

Just like the feeling he has towards his Dynamos, did he have a same feeling of attachment towards Queen of Nasods?

"Attachment….. what a stupid story."

But according to Eun, Add becomes D because he was too obsessed with Eve. He didn't want to admit it but he had a feeling that Eun's words weren't a lie.

"Everything I did for you, what I'll do from now on, you'll never know. I'm not asking you to understand. But….."

"Add."

Eve slowly shook her head then grabbed Add's hand then started push it aside.

"I'm not the one who should be hearing this."

"I know that already…. But I can't help but to say it."

"….."

Revealing his feelings to a Nasod with just a same face was meaningless thing to do. Wasn't Add planning to steal this Eve's lips and core then run away in the first place?

What kind of hunter shows a gap in their heart, a weakness to their prey?

"Here's one….."

"……."

Eve didn't answer but didn't push Add's hand away further. His hand was at a distance where he could stroke Eve's face again if he just moved the tip of his hand. But Add restrained himself.

Nothing will change no matter how much he touched her. It will only increase the gap in his heart.

"Will you cooperate with me if needed…..so I can return to my universe?"

At Add's words Eve stayed still for a moment then nodded slightly. It felt like he got a permission so Add grabbed both of Eve's shoulders then slowly moved his face closer.

Eve stared intently at Add's face getting closer to her.

"……"

Add stopped at the closest possible distance. His prey was completely off guard, he could end her life with just a wave of his hand…..

But her silent gaze…..

"..…Thanks for that."

Add whispered quietly then backed out as he took his hands off Eve's shoulders.

Eve blankly stared at Add.

Add lay down hoping he looked natural as possible then pulled up his bedsheets.

"I'm tired. I'm going to sleep first."

"……."

No answer came from behind him but Add forcefully closed his eyes. He didn't know if stopping what he was about to do was right….. It seemed he won't be able to sleep easily tonight.

Because his heart was beating strangely.

Grand Cavern.

Karis approached Scar who was looking at a giant hole in the air. Karis looked extremely furious unlike how she usually composed herself in front of Scar.

"Just what were you doing Scar? Only my minions got destroyed by the El Search Party! Those twins said they couldn't assist because of your orders! Why did you let only my minions go to waste?!"

"I should have told you already to just let them come."

When Scar spoke rigidly, Karis got bewildered and retorted.

"Don't you know that situations can always change? Are we not going to do anything and just let them come to us?"

"This place will become their grave in the end."

"Just what makes you so confident? I admit you are strong. But….."

Scar smiled bitterly when Karis folded her arms and glared detestably at him.

"Why are you so impatient Karis? The demon god resurrection ritual is already reaching its final stage."

"I won't let them die peacefully after mocking me. I have to make them beg for their life!"

"Don't worry. We'll finish them off here soon."

Blue flames rose from Scar's hand as he spoke while gripping his fist.

"Red haired knight, I'm the one who'll end her life."

"That's why….."

Shouldn't they smash the El Search Party now while they were divided? Scar was acting too confident. Even he should know that the El Search Party banding together will make it troublesome to defeat them. Of course, Scar does possess enormous power so his overflowing confidence was understandable…. But shouldn't they at least be slightly cautious just in case?

However, Karis who was trying to get Scar to change his mind became surprised by his next words.

"Dragon is coming here."

"……What?"

There was only one being Scar could be referring to. Karis got shocked and looked around. Scar smiled bitterly at how Karis was on guard thinking maybe the dragon was already here.

"We're on the same side until demon god is resurrected. And if the demon god resurrects, even that dragon cannot stop us."

"…..That's true. But can we trust him?"

Karis stopped trying to convince Scar after realizing the source of confidence. She spoke with an uneasy voice.

With In, Jin, Scar and Karis that were already here… and if that dragon also joined them, then this place will certainly become the El Search Party's grave.

"Then do you think that dragon will join with the El Search Party and disrupt the demon god resurrection ritual? He's not someone who'll do that. Hah"

"……"

At Scar's laugh, Karis sighed then turned around.

"I'll go prepare for the battle. You should get ready too."

"Alright."

Scar raised his head and looked up at the air when Karis walked away. The giant hole was gathering enormous amount of mana.

Demon god will resurrect soon.

"Red Haired Knight, we'll finally settle our score this time…..!"

Moment when the grand wish of the demons will be fulfilled was approaching, and the moment when he'll settle the score with his arch nemesis was ever so close. Scar clenched his fists from excitement.

El Search Party? Priestess? There was no way they were going to leave this Grand Cavern alive. Even Karis who had been so uneasy before acknowledged this fact.

Dragon was coming.

Red Demise, the most ferocious, greedy and strongest dragon that's been ever recorded in history.

Perkisas.

3. Final Battle in the Grand Cavern

Grand Cavern entrance.

El Search Party regrouped in front of the entrance. Something must have happened between Elsword and Aisha because there was a strange atmosphere between them ……but everyone else seemed fine.

"Then let's enter the Grand Cavern. This place is Scar's lair so even I don't know too much." Lu spoke cautiously.

"Karis should be here as well. We don't know what tricks she might use so let's all be careful."

Lu nodded to Ciel's warning.

"Yes, and I'd like to settle things with Karis personally if possible."

"The battle could get chaotic so I can't grantee that. Do you understand Lu?"

Elesis cautioned and Lu reluctantly accepted.

"Fine."

"Our objective is to defeat Scar and stop the demon god resurrection ritual. Don't forget that everyone."

Elesis spoke in a grave tone then loosened her expression as she looked at Add.

"Add, thanks for coming together with us. You shouldn't have to help with fights in our universe."

"Hmph, don't say something useless. I'm just sticking around you guys for my own goals."

"Then, I'll be thankful if you stuck with us till then end."

Add nodded quietly when Elesis asked with a grin. During this battle, Add was planning to search for a way to go back while putting his plans into motion.

Although that didn't mean he will overlook it when the El Search Party came into danger……

Add stole a glance at Eve. Eve who was staring at Elsword must have noticed Add's gaze so she turned to look at Add.

Add felt somewhat guilty after meeting her eyes so he quickly turned his head away and looked only forwards.

"Okay, let's go everyone!"

Aisha got surprised when Elsword took a deep breath then dashed forward alone while shouting.

"Wait! Why are you running off on your own?!"

"Let's go everyone!"

Elesis spoke refreshingly then dashed forward as well. Other El Search Party members all started to run after Elsword.

Elsword energetically ran forward, Aisha had a disgruntled face as she followed behind Elsword, Rena followed with a cold expression beside Aisha, Raven followed as he quietly scanned the situation from beside Rena, Eve followed calmly behind Raven, Chung followed with a determined face beside Eve, Elesis followed with her sword gripped tightly behind Chung, Ara followed nervously to the left of Elesis, Add followed on his Dynamos behind Ara and Lu who was excited for battle and Ciel who guarded Lu's side followed after Add.

It was start of their final battle in the Grand Cavern, the fight to stop the demon god resurrection ritual.

"……Huh?!"

The first irregularity of this battle was a shout from Elsword who had been running at the front. Elsword's body seemed to get surrounded by light then he disappeared in an instant.

Aisha looked down at the floor in surprise then shouted urgently.

"Be careful! Forced teleport…..!"

A light surrounded Aisha's body too as she spoke. Everyone tried to react somehow but they didn't have enough time.

Add also felt his body getting surrounded by light as he instinctively forced himself to dash forward.

Somewhere inside the Grand Cavern.

Elsword who got teleported first looked around with his sword raised. It was a place he was seeing for the first time and he couldn't see the other party members that were with him just before.

"Where is this place?"

"……That's what you get for running in without any plans."

Elsword turned back due to the muttering voice from behind him. Aisha was glaring at him angrily.

"We don't have much time to stop the demon god from resurrecting. We should hurry."

"But nothing is going to get solved by running in recklessly. Just how long are you going to fight while only looking at what's ahead of you? Grow up a little you idiot."

"……What happen to the others?"

Aisha made even more of an upset face when Elsword ignored her words and asked where the others were. But she quickly regained her composure.

This place was a wide platform floating in midair and there were only two of them on top of it….. Aisha thought at least she had to stay level-headed.

"We got caught by the forced teleport magic circles. It was hidden in a very clever way. Was it Karis's doing? She didn't look like she had this much power. There could be someone else behind all of….."

Elsword only focused on the main point as Aisha trailed her words.

"Then did everyone else get separated like us? They should be safe, right?"

"You should worry more about yourself. You would have been separated all by yourself without knowing how to come back if I didn't follow right behind you this time. Just how long do I have to take care of you?"

"I never asked you to take care of me….."

"What did you say? Who do you think I'm going through all this trouble for?"

Elsword closed his mouth when Aisha's eyes became furious.

It was tiresome for Elsword to deal with Aisha since she tended to get angry from him merely mentioning the truth. Elsword couldn't grasp which part of what he said was always making her angry.

'Come to think of it, she always seems to get angry only at me……"

Didn't she get along with everyone else rather fine? Of course, she did seem slightly at odds with Add but Add was that kind of person in the first place.

Elsword responded by keeping quiet as Aisha kept glaring at him with a face as if saying 'try to refute me if you can'. It was better for him to keep quiet……

In that moment, Elsword's face became serious as he held his sword up.

"I know how we can get back to the others."

Then dimension gates opened in front of the two as Steel Lava Fighters started to pour out. Aisha spoke as she became nervous.

"This platform is too small. It's all over if we fall from here."

"Aisha, I'm going to weave through them so get ready to fire off a big one!"

"Wait!"

Aisha got frustrated at being ordered one-sidedly but Elsword didn't listen to her as he dashed out towards the demons.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Rena narrowed her eyes then scanned her surroundings when the light finally disappeared. She was on top of a floating platform, she couldn't see any way out.

"…..I don't see the others."

Rena nodded gravely to agree with the man standing beside her who just spoke.

"Attacking us yesterday was…..just a trick to get us overconfident. We only thought about beating Scar and Karis quickly after our easy victory against the minions…. I never imagined they had laid this kind of trap."

"Rena."

"This is my fault. I should have anticipated something like this."

The man slowly shook his head.

"Even if this was a trap by the demons, it's not something you should feel responsible for."

"But….."

Elsword was still young and while Elesis was skillful she could be overly reckless. So shouldn't it be Rena's job to level-headedly analyze the situation then come up with a countermeasure?

This was how Rena thought of her position in the El Search Party all this time.

"You shouldn't blame yourself for this all alone."

"……."

Raven looked at Rena with a complicated expression. There were so many piled up words that he should be saying to her but he couldn't get a grasp of how he should convey them. When he quietly stared at Rena without knowing which words to say first, Rena sighed then spoke with a calm voice.

"Thanks Raven. I calmed down a bit thanks to you. We can't do anything about what already happened…. We should be thinking about what to do now."

That's not what I meant… Raven was meaning to say Rena was taking too much responsibility upon herself. But his timing to say this had already passed.

Rena seemed to have pushed all her self-blame into the corner of her mind and was now observing their surroundings sharply. She was scanning the terrain, tapping the floor and trying to figure out where they were. She was completely focused on how to regroup with the others.

Raven who was looking at Rena's back closed his eyes. Bringing up the past won't mean anything now. Even so…..

"Even what happened to the Elves wasn't your fault."

"……"

Rena who was moving her hands winced then froze up. As Raven thought, these words had come too late after all.

He should have been beside her long ago and told her these words when she was in pain….. But Rena had already strongly shut off her emotions on her own by the time Raven realized what had occurred.

Despite how this elf went through a tragedy which tore her heart apart, it won't be an exaggeration to say that Rena possessed mind of steel which allowed her to recover all on her own. Rena's mental strength should be stronger than anyone else in the El Search Party.

Incomparably beautiful steel sword, but could there be a dent in that sword right now?

Raven always kept these thoughts in his mind and wasn't able to bring it up until now. There weren't many chances to talk to Rena alone…. And he hadn't been confident if he had the strength to reforge the possibly damaged sword, if he had the strength to comfort others and ease their minds.

This uncertainty was because Raven himself was also a sword remade by somehow scraping together the shattered pieces.

Raven who was looking down at his left arm…his Nasod arm, clenched his fist.

He wasn't certain if he had the ability or right to comfort others. That's why he had neglected this conversation with Rena all this time…..

"Raven."

Rena who had been sitting examining the platform pushed on the ground then stood up. She gave a light sigh then shook her head. This was a much lighter reaction than Raven had prepared for.

"I'm sorry for making you worry."

"No, I was……"

Raven tried to convey the words that he kept shut inside himself all this time. But Rena shook her head again.

"Elesis keeps teasing me more recently. She's really like a mischievous kid."

"……"

"She must be concerned because she thinks I've changed. But everyone tends to change…. Although I guess it's strange for this to apply to long-living elves….."

Rena spoke that much then looked back at Raven.

"Honestly, I wasn't particularly interested if I had changed. I left those matters for later. All I thought about was defeating the enemy. I was in a position where I had to lead the Elf squadron so I had no time to look back upon myself. I only recently got some chances for personal activities after arriving in Lanox."

"…..I see."

"But I plan to think about this carefully after finishing this fight. Of course, I won't change all of a sudden…. But the fight against demons should get somewhat wrapped up after solving this crisis in Lanox."

Rena was serenely speaking about the future.

"I don't know what kind of person I'll be then…. but I imagine I'll be a better person than right now. Does this sound strange for me to say?"

"No."

When Raven shook his head stiffly, Rena approached him then sighed.

"I ended up making you worry too. I'm sorry."

"I did what's obvious. We're….."

Raven hesitated for a brief moment then gave an obvious sounding answer.

"Comrades after all."

"…..Yes, comrades."

Rena closed her eyes and savored the tone of that word. She tried to make a thin smile…..then changed her expression drastically then turned around. Raven also noticed someone else's presence and drew his blade.

Dimension gate opened as In and Jin appeared.

"We can't let you get to General Scar."

"We'll finish you two here."

Raven asked shortly.

"Are they the enemies you told me about?"

"Yes, they seem like Scar's direct subordinates. They are quite skilled. Be careful."

In laughed with a loud voice.

"Two of you looked quite skilled amongst the El Search Party so we'll take care of you two personally by ourselves."

Jin didn't say anything as she ran in swinging her serpentine sword. Rena also didn't say anything more as she drew her sword while running in.

2 vs 2 fight started.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Chung and Ara who also got teleported to some platform were in middle of a battle. Ara's energy blast sent the Steel Lava Fighters flying and Chung's cannons attacked the Incubi that were waiting for their chances in the air.

But there were too many of them. The two that's been fighting the enemy for a while stood back to back in middle of the platform as they caught their breaths.

While they did that, dimension gate opened once more as demons poured out again.

"There's really no end to them….."

"What should we do Big Sister Ara?"

At Chung's question, Ara made her decision.

"Others should be fighting somewhere else too. Let's do our best here as well."

"Then what about Scar or Karis…..?"

"I don't think this is the time to be conserving our strengths. We'll think about what happens later when the time comes, Mr.Chung!"

Chung nodded at Ara's words then closed his eyes. After taking in a deep breath, he abruptly opened his eyes.

"Haaaaaah!!"

Chung's armor seemed to get larger with his shout then it transformed into a full body armor that protected his body perfectly. Berserk mode, it was an ability passed down in the Seiker family.

"Haah!"

Ara also seemed to do a backflip as her appearance changed into a form with white hair, red eyes and blindingly white nine tails.

It was the Celestial Fox state which brought out the power of the fox within her.

"I'll go first, Mr.Chung!"

Ara ran to the left as Chung also ran towards the right. How they didn't look back at each other and ran into the enemies by themselves seemed like they were making a suicidal attack…. but the truth was different.

Boom!!

Impact multiple times larger than the ones two had been showing in the previous fight swept over the demons. Demons fell like leaves before the storm whenever white fox flew in swinging her spear. Demons got utterly shattered whenever white armor ran in swinging his Destroyer.

Fox and armor moved about in the darkness as they crushed their enemies.

No matter how many enemies they faced, they could never lose when the two of them were fighting together.

Grand Cavern, under the dark hole in mid air sucking in everything.

Elesis closed her eyes then shook her head. After sighing, she opened only one eye then glared at the enemy showing his back toward her.

"Long time no see…. Blue Lava Scar!"

"Yes, it's been a long time. Red Haired Knight."

Demon general Scar slowly turned around. Scar's rank was equal to Karis and Ran but he was the most powerful amongst demons in terms of pure physical and destructive power.

Just him turning around made the ground platform he was standing on shatter and make the debris fly away.

Of course, this kind of destruction wouldn't happen normally since Scar controlled his power. This was a side-effect of him having no intention of controlling his power right now.

Elesis knew this as well and smiled.

"I was skeptic at first but I didn't think you'd really invite me alone. Are the others okay?"

"There can't be any distractions in our fight."

It was a simple answer but Elesis confirmed Scar's motives. What happened just now was nothing more than a simple forced teleport. Other Search Party members should be fighting their own respective battles.

And in front of Elesis was Scar. The strongest amongst demons was standing by himself.

"Strongest amongst demons….."

Elesis smiled as she raised her sword. Scar smiled back at Elesis as he raised his sword. It was a very satisfactory smile.

"Strongest amongst humans….."

No one would dare object to Elesis and Scar representing their race. Humans or demons, which side was stronger will be decided by their fight.

"No, calling you the strongest amongst humans isn't enough. Red Haired Knight, strongest in Elrios, let's finally settle our score today!"

"Yes, strongest in Demon Realm. I'll destroy you for certain today. I'll also stop the demon god resurrection ritual while at it."

"Kahaha. If you can."

Storm suddenly started to blow as Scar unleashed his full power while laughing. The air was shaking due to Scar's unleashed power.

Elesis smiled energetically as she confronted the energy storm blowing against her.

"Alright, let's do this!"

Red Haired Knight and Blue Lava Demon charged towards each other.

The strongest in Elrios versus the strongest in Demon Realm, one who survives this fight will truly obtain the title of strongest!

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Lu who was standing on top of a platform blinked.

"Oooh, it suddenly became bright then we got moved to somewhere else. How intriguing."

"Nothing seems to be wrong with our bodies."

Ignia frowned when Ciel who was standing beside Lu answered.

"Just what's going on? Did demons have this kind of power? I don't know about others….but to move me, a priestess?"

Ignia's remark sounded arrogant but she could say it because she was actually incredibly powerful. You could tell how powerful Ignia was from how she was the only priestess that survived while other priestesses were being murdered by the demons and also from how she protected Lanox as final line of defense against the demons until the El Search Party came to assist.

Lu tilted her head as if she couldn't understand either.

"It was an unfamiliar magical wave."

"Lanox would have fallen already long ago if there was someone this powerful amongst the demons…."

Ignia was more worried about what kind of incredibly powerful being made this event possible rather than being glad that she was okay after the teleport. But even Lu who was previously lord of the Demon Realm didn't have any clues.

Ciel spoke as he looked forward.

"Looks like someone with an answer is showing up."

"Yaaawn."

Dimension gate opened then Karis walked out from it while yawning lightly. She even stretched as if to show off then glared at Lu with narrow eyes.

"So we meet each other like this. Lord Luciela."

"Karis, was calling me here your doing? You shouldn't have this much power."

Lu demanded with a cold voice. The reason Lu lost her original power and ended up wandering in Elrios was because of betrayal by Karis who had been her direct subordinate.

Although Lu never liked Karis' actions, she took good care of Karis regardless. Lu did scold Karis from time to time whenever she did things wrong but Lu never imagined to get betrayed by her.

"Even a dog recognises its master…. But apparently, demons don't."

Karis chuckled with a low voice after hearing Lu scold her.

"Ahaha, no matter what you say, you don't look dignified at all in that small weak form right now. Don't worry, I'll take away whatever remaining power you have…. Then make you a decoration in my room. I guess could leave behind at least your arms and legs if you beg for your life now."

"Nonsense! This war would never have happened if you didn't betray me! That foolish warmongering faction must have shifted the popular opinion in the Demon Realm towards invading Elrios when I who was against the war disappeared!"

"Yes, that's correct. That's why I betrayed you after all."

Karis licked her lips as if saying something obvious then twisted her body. Looking down on her old master whom she betrayed must be giving her quite stimulating pleasure.

"It's not like I hated you Lord Luciela. Your words were always drastically ideal but you were pretty after all…. And you always came to save me whenever my life was in danger. You treated me who was powerless kindly and adored me. Honestly, I might have loved you… No, I certainly loved you."

"……"

"Come to think of it now, I completely fell for you. Yes, so this is love. I fell in love."

Lu was bewildered by this sudden confession but Karis smiled seductively as if she was getting excited.

"Isn't that true? When a demon lord who's so beautiful like a goddess takes care of you and cherishes you…. wouldn't you naturally fall in love with her?"

"You say you love her yet you betrayed her? You're insane Karis."

Karis made an extremely dissatisfied face when Ciel replied to her boldly.

It was as if Karis didn't approve of Ciel's existence. She glared at Ciel with a murderous intent but sighed in the end then shook her head.

"But Lord Luciela treats everyone equally and was too idealistic. I knew that she didn't cherish me because she particularly liked me or because I was lovely. I already knew it was only because I was her subordinate. Not just that, but I wanted to exact vengeance against the Celestial Realm….. That's when Scar timely asked me to join hands with him."

"So?"

Karis burst out laughing when Lu asked calmly.

"Wasn't it same as catching two birds with one stone for me if I betrayed you, Lord Luciela? I can both start a war and keep my beloved Lord Luciela caged within my embrace at the same time? Oh my! I had no choice but to betray you after all."

"Are you finished blurting out nonsense Karis?"

Lu frowned as she summoned her magical gauntlets. Karis stared at Lu with extremely overjoyed eyes.

"I love you Lord Luciela. So I'll kill anyone who gets in our way. Then I'll make you submit to my words. No matter how much you try to resist me…. You'll be tormented when people you know start to die in front of your eyes, right? You wouldn't let that happen, right? I'll continue to make you watch Elrios get destroyed until you listen to me, until you accept my feelings."

"…..You guys are talking about something very weird. But."

Ignia who had been listening quietly pointed her spear at Karis. She glared at Karis as if she was her sworn enemy.

"If what I just heard is correct…. Lu, demons invaded Elrios because you were exiled from the Demon Realm?"

"…..Yes, I could have stopped this war from happening if I stayed in power. It's all my fault."

Flames burst up from Ignia's body when Lu painfully admitted. Ignia's powers were flowing out of control because she was too enraged.

"And Karis' betrayal got you exiled?"

Ignia was grinding her teeth as if everything was clear now.

"So that means, the reason Gloria and Darkmoon died, the reason other priestesses lost their lives….the reason so many people of Elrios died in this war against demons was because of this insane demon in front of my eyes?"

"Ah, I get it, you're the fire priestess."

Karis gazed at Ignia with bleary eyes as if she just figured out.

"You look pretty too but is a bit arrogant. Well, I guess I can let you into my collection…. But you should know your place. Fix your insolent stare first if you want to stay alive and become my slave."

"……I'll burn you until nothing remains."

Karis laughed loudly when Ignia gripped her spear tightly while grinding her teeth.

"Ah, is that it? Are you here for revenge? Come to think of it…. there were other priestesses too. Yes, there were…. Scar asked me to kill them so me and my minions took care of them."

"….."

"Security was quite lax so they were easy to kidnap. I toyed with them one by one then killed them when I got bored. It wasn't bad for entertainment. Who were the youngest amongst them again? There were some twins….were they sun and moon priestesses? Am I right?"

Karis smiled brightly as she looked at Ignia.

"Their names were Gloria and Darkmoon, right? Do you know whose name they called before they were mangled to death? Please spare me Master Karis, don't hate me, Master Karis. I'll do anything, Master Karis….."

Boom!! Ignia became an orb of fire in that moment and ran into Karis.

Somewhere in the Grand Cavern.

Add was on his knees and panting after the forced teleport. He recalled the sensation he felt when infiltrating the Velder inner castle so he immediately ran forward to not get separated from Eve.

And the result….

"It's heavy, useless."

"……."

He was holding Eve down on the ground by pressing on her shoulders. Eve looked at Add displeasingly from being pushed down.

"I said it's heavy, useless….."

"….Wait."

Eve looked annoyed because Add didn't move aside but she didn't try to push Add away by force. Come to think of it, Eve always judged Add as useless…..but she was treating him as someone she needed to take care of at the same time. She won't instantly retaliate with force even if Add does something rather rude.

She was like that when Add was touching her face before too. Anyways… Add was successful in securing Eve from the forced teleport.

They were by themselves now so this was the perfect chance for Add to achieve his goal.

Add was staring down at Eve while making cold calculations in his head when…. A voice came from above.

"That's a nice scene there. So how long are you two going to stay like that? I'd like it if you proceeded quickly if you're going to do something."

Add raised his head from the sudden voice to see Ara looking down on them as she sat on the tip of her spear which was diagonally stabbed on the ground.

White hair and red eyes, 3 tails waving in the air, it was Eun who was borrowing Ara's appearance.

"……Excuse me."

Add realized Eun was watching so he quickly moved away from Eve. Showing this kind of scene was embarrassing…..even if Eun was his ally with the same objective as him.

Eve stood up by grabbing the hand Add held out to her then summoned Ophelia to hit the dust off her back. Eve's gaze as she was tidying up headed towards Eun who was sitting on the spear.

"You're…..not Ara."

"Yes, I'm a nameless fox borrowing Ara's appearance just for a while. I'm an old friend of that boy in front of you."

"Friend?"

Eun shrugged when Add responded to that unreasonable word disgruntledly.

"It's true that we're lovers in time but I shouldn't be saying that in front of the girl. Please do understand."

"…..It's getting worse."

Eun gave a beautiful disapproving glance at Add when he frowned from not even wanting to retort.

"My, boy can be quite cruel. Can't he vouch for me since we've fought alongside each other for so long? I should definitely pass for his lover after all we've been through. I mean we did sleep on the same bed couple times already."

"Where is this place?"

Eun purposely made an audible sigh when Add ignored her and started the area scan.

"You're ignoring me after licking my tails so much in your sleep? That's so harsh boy. You were only interested in my tails after all"

"…..So Eun was here too."

Eun nodded when Eve spoke as if she understood.

"That's correct, girl. But let's talk about the details later. Boy's business should be more urgent."

"Yes, so Add. Where is this place? Where are the others?"

Oberon and Ophelia that Eve commanded were proficient in battle or other petty tasks but they didn't have any features to scan for life signatures in a wide area.

That feature was for Dynamos alone.

"Everyone seems to have gotten separated…."

Life signatures from far away… El Search Party's signatures and other signatures around them...

"They must be engaging the enemy."

"Then let's go assist."

Three of them were currently on top of a circular platform floating in midair. While Eve, Oberon and Ophelia had features to float temporarily, they didn't have any long flight feature.

"What are you doing Add?"

"Dynamo's flight isn't perfect yet…."

Dynamos surrounding Add still hadn't reached their maximum number of 6. Eve noticed this as well and made a disappointed face.

"How utterly useless….."

"……"

Previous remarks from Eve had been only light teases but she looked really disappointed this time. This hurt Add's pride quite a lot. He wanted to prove that there was no problem with flight with only 5 Dynamos, that he could transport 2 people easily.

But he couldn't. He didn't secure a time alone with Eve for no reason (Although Eun appearing was outside his calculation). He originally planned to achieve his goals during the final battle with the demons….and a great chance to go through with that plan was here.

Add collected his voice as he stared at Eve. He had to start his plan now.

"Wait, there is still a way……"

"Girl, boy is saying he'll give you a ride on the Dynamos if you kiss him later."

Add froze from the sound that came from behind him.

This situation was akin to him putting a vegetable on the cutting board to start slicing….then having someone else taking the entire vegetable and eating it whole.

Eve asked as she looked over Add's shoulder.

"What does that mean?"

"Boy will give you a ride if you give him a kiss later. That's the condition."

"……You mean that membrane contact?"

Eve looked at Add with an expression as if she couldn't understand at all.

Add felt like jumping off from here since all his plot was revealed. Eve's direct stare was….strangely tormenting.

Just battling the demons would be much easier.

"That's an incomprehensible request. According to Rena and Elesis, humans seems carry out the act as a sign of affection…. But I'm a Nasod."

"But boy is a human. It shouldn't be too difficult of an exchange condition."

Ah, he seriously wanted to tear this fox's mouth apart. After everything he planned was ruined, Add clenched his fists and started to turn around.

I'll tear that fox's mouth off for sure today……

"I understand. So let's head out quickly now."

"……."

Add who was about to settle his score with Eun froze in place. Eve spoke coldly towards Add who was slowly turning around while suspecting if he had just misheard.

"I'll do it after the fight. So let's head out quickly."

"R-really?"

He just asked such a stupid question with such a stupid voice. Add seriously wanted to jump off into that abyss below. Dying would be better than living like this.

Eve became very offended when Add asked again.

"Do you think Queen of Nasods would tell a lie? I promise."

"….."

No, was it really okay for her to decide so easily like this? She's going to do it just as a travel fee(?)?

What has all of Add's struggles about affection points been for?

"Others could be in danger if we stall too long. Hurry."

"Uh……."

Add didn't realize his face was turning red. Eve made her decision calmly as ever but Add was the one who was flustered right now.

Was this result okay? No, why did he worry so much in the first place if this was going to happen? Didn't this make him look like an idiot for being so worried?

"Add."

Eve grabbed Add's cheeks with both of her hands then made him look straightly into her eyes.

Beautiful Nasod met her eyes with Add then explained clearly with a voice that rang in his heart.

"I know you're confused about fighting in this different universe and how everyone's all separated. It's the same for me, but your Dynamos are the only things that can move without being restricted by the terrain."

"……"

"Chance for you to be useful has finally arrived. Try displaying your skills."

Cool slowly returned to Add's head when his eyes met Eve's direct stare and heard her logical decision. Add forced a smile on his face then started to move his hands.

"Alright, let's go."

Five Dynamos opened up like flower petals then floated up while supporting Add's feet. Eve held the hem of her skirt as she stepped on top of the Dynamos.

Add hesitated for a moment then put his arms around Eve's waist to hold onto her tightly.

Eun who was watching turned into small fox form then dived into Add's jacket pocket.

Add spoke strongly after finishing his preparations.

"Let's go."

Although his mind was cluttered and dizzy, he got a kiss promise from Eve. Let's leave aside the feeling of wanting to question Eve's actions for later.

Even though this Search Party was from a different universe, he didn't want to watch them get killed by demons again.

Everyone was struggling from the battle that ensued after falling into the demon's trap. But their crisis was also their chance. This was the chance to turn this trap against them and achieve victory.

And the only thing that could turn this situation around was Add and his Dynamos.

Eve must have read Add's intentions because she quietly stuck close to him then put her arms around his waist. Human and Nasod held onto each other as they flew across the darkness and towards the battle.

The platform turned into a sea of fire. Ignia burned everything in front of her with all her strength then started to pour rain of fire as if she wasn't satisfied.

Grrrooowar! Flames hot enough to instantly kill anything they grazed rained down on the platform.

"Wait! That's enough, it's dangerous!"

Ignia managed to withdraw her spear after hearing Lu's complaint coming from behind her. The rain of fire started to subside gradually. Ignia felt like destroying everything but remembered they were standing on top of a floating platform.

The platform had tilted off balance due to Ignia's firepower but was returning to normal once she withdrew her rain of fire.

Ignia glared at the area in front of her where the flames were slowly subsiding.

She poured all the firepower she had because she couldn't hold in her rage. No regular demons could have possibly withstood that.

"With this much….."

Even Karis, a demon general wouldn't have gotten unscathed. Ignia still focused her attention in front of her just in case. Then she heard a frightening voice.

"That's a violent way to greet someone, priestess."

"…..!"

Karis had appeared from behind Ignia without any noises. Ignia instinctively turned around to swing her spear but Karis easily stopped the spear's shaft with her palm.

Then Karis smiled cruelly while stroking Ignia's face with her other hand.

"Wasn't that reaction too much from a little tease? I even praised you for being pretty….."

"Why you!!"

Enraged by the taunt, Ignia quickly surrounded her body in flames. But Karis read this beforehand and dodged by immediately letting go of the spear and flapping her wings to fly above.

"You're making such a fuss over nothing. Well, it did annoy me how I got to kill all the other priestesses except you. How you lose your temper quickly is quite cute so I'll toy with you for a while then kill you when I get bored. Fire priestess…."

Karis who was mouthing spiteful words urgently turned her head. Bullet that Ciel fired grazed by her cheek.

It didn't end there as Ciel took up position with a cold face then took his aim at Karis in the air.

"Death Sentence of Marbas!"

Ratatatatatatata! Karis was momentarily surprised by the endless hail of bullets but smiled seductively after as she swiftly dove down. Cruel smile appeared on Karis' face as she dove down while dodging the storm of bullets Ciel fired at her.

"I have no intention of toying with you! I'm going to kill you this instant….!"

Karis was approaching rapidly but her face suddenly got distorted in pain. Lu who was looking for her chance had suddenly jumped up and scratched Karis' side.

Karis' body got flung sideways from the shock of her side being torn apart.

Lu didn't look satisfied even though she had just landed a perfect hit. Lu scolded gravely while glaring at Karis who wasn't moving after falling on her side.

"Stop pretending to be hurt and get up Karis. This shouldn't be all there is to your power."

Karis' shoulders shook from laughter after hearing those words then she raised her head slightly. Her gestures were enough to seduce any man…… but the smile on her face was indescribably heinous.

"My, that's so cruel. Getting hit by Lord Luciela hurts my heart more than my body. It's my side that got hit but it's also hurting my heart."

"……."

Lu stared at Karis without knowing how to respond. This subordinate betrayed her, stole her power, and made her a lone wanderer and now was suddenly making a love confession to her?

Lu treated this as nonsense at first…. But it seemed Karis was being honest after all.

"It looks like your heart has been quite twisted while I wasn't paying attention to you. I do not wish to speak with you anymore. I'll take your life right here….for old times sake."

"Twisted? I don't understand what you mean. Isn't it obvious for demons to steal and destroy to obtain what they want? So if I wanted to obtain you, Lord Luciela and make you a decoration for my room so that I can love you whenever I get the chance….. Then I should obviously take your power and make you inferior to me. Wasn't making you my slave without caring about ways or means the only way for me to fulfill my desires?"

"……"

Ciel aimed his gunblade with a disgusted expression. He harbored grudge against Karis for killing him when he was still a human but the words she was speaking disgusted him beyond his grudge.

"Ciel."

Lu clenched her fists as she called Ciel. She was telling Ciel that they should attack together to finish Karis once and for all. But Ignia who had been looking for her chance ran in first.

"Haah!!"

Trail of fire emerged whenever Ignia waved her spear towards Karis. Normal demons would have gotten burnt completely from just being grazed by these flames.

One could block Ignia's spear but couldn't block the flames that came after.

Thus, these were attacks that must be dodged. They were incredibly bothersome attacks but Karis calmly dodged all of them then managed to swing her scythe in response.

"You're cute too…. But you're in the way right now!"

"Ugh!"

Ignia who didn't expect a counter quickly raised her spear to block. No one ever challenged the Fire Priestess to a close quarter combat because they could get burnt by the flames following her spear attacks and blocking those flames required enormous power.

Karis was a demon general but did she really have the power to block Ignia's flames? After blocking Karis' scythe, Ignia gritted her teeth as she conjured up a huge wall of flames around her. Flames larger than Ignia's height rose up as it spread onto Karis' scythe as well.

But Karis gave up on her scythe without any regrets then dodged the flames by flying backwards.

"Spectral Spear!"

Lu's eyes gleamed from this chance as she threw a magical spear at Karis who was flying backwards. This was the perfect chance to get Karis while she had abandoned her weapon. Karis' eyes widened as she hastily dodged to the side but Ciel was already waiting in the line of fire.

"Triple shot!"

Three consecutive shots, three bullets directly hit Karis who had just barely dodged Lu's spear. Karis' eyes opened widely after getting shot on her leg, chest and shoulder in an instant.

"Huh, how did I……"

As Karis fell to the floor, Lu kicked the ground then dashed in for the finish.

"It's over! Shadow Bolt!"

Lu waved her arm widely as she ran in then a magic circle opened above Karis' head. Countless magic spears started to fall from the magic circle as they pierced through Karis' body. Karis who was blocking with her arms couldn't withstand the spears and fell on her knees while groaning in pain.

As Karis knelt on her knees from the spears falling from above her, Lu stood in front of Karis and spoke coldly.

"I'll turn back all the wrongs you've committed. So go to sleep now, Karis."

"Uuuugh…… uuuuhahahahaha!!!"

As a chill went down Lu's spine from Karis' sudden laugh….. arms suddenly came around Lu's neck. Lu looked back in surprise to see Karis smiling with her arms wrapped around Lu's neck.

"You're still good at speaking idealistically, Lord Luciela."

"You……!"

Was Karis they've been fighting until now an illusion? Lu got frightened and quickly tried to escape by striking Karis with her elbow. But Karis who read this beforehand grabbed Lu's arm tightly then waved her around.

"Now, beg for your life! Lord Luciela!"

Bam! Bam! Bam! Karis repeatedly bashed Lu down on the ground as if she was some kind of toy. Even through all this, Lu gritted her teeth as she waved her magic gauntlet.

Slash!! Lu's attack was effective as it made a huge scar on Karis' stomach. Karis got startled and let go of Lu's arm as she backed up while pressing down on her wound.

"Ow, it hurts…. Lord Luciela. I just wanted to play……"

"….."

Karis was groaning miserably in pain but Lu was pressing down on her own bleeding wound and panting as she glared at Karis. Lu's feeling of caution right now was mutual between Ciel and Ignia as well.

This was because…. Karis that was getting struck by the Shadow Bolt and Karis that was in pain from getting hit on the stomach was existing at the same time.

There were two Karises. But they couldn't be twins….

"Did you create duplicates using your mana? But…."

"You would have noticed if it was a trick like that?"

The first Karis stood up after the Shadow Bolt ended. When she put her hand on the shoulder of second Karis who was pressing down on her stomach wound, two Karises combined into one.

Then the stomach wound on Karis healed immediately.

"……"

The three of them closed their mouth from this shocking scene. Duplicating ability was usually for distracting the enemies with an illusion. But what Karis was doing wasn't a normal duplication.

"Do you want to know what this is? I might tell you if you beg me, Lord Luciela."

Tsh! Ciel's gun answered instead. Bullet aimed at Karis' forehead hit its mark….. but Karis was merely frowning in response.

"How dare a lowly human male butt into a conversation between me and Lord Luciela? I was originally going to use you to torture Lord Luciela but….. I'm going to kill you after all."

"……"

She could still frown with a bullet stuck on her forehead? Ignia gasped from being taken aback.

"……You're trying to bring about a disaster Karis! You made a foolish choice! How dare you lay your hands on space-time!"

Lu screamed in anger after realizing what was going on. Karis grinned while making a cute wink. As she did this, bullet stuck on her forehead came out on its own and the wound healed by itself.

It was as if time was getting rewound.

"That's correct. Aaaaah, as to be expected of my Lord Luciela. You have the right to be my favorite slave."

"Laying hands on space-time is the greatest forbidden act. No demon has gone down that path! Just why……"

"We're going to blow away Elrios and the Celestial Realm. So what's the use in caring about some taboo like that? Scar didn't complain about this."

"I've made a grave mistake! I helped to raise a disaster!"

Lu glared at Karis with a revolting expression. Lu had been acting emotionally before because she was taking her old relationship with Karis into account but she now looked determined to erase Karis from this world no matter what.

Lu answered quickly when Ciel standing beside her asked what was going on with an eye gesture.

"Karis must have laid her hands upon domain of space-time. What we just saw wasn't a duplicate, it was Karis that exists in another timeline."

"…..She's controlling time?"

Lu nodded nervously when Ignia asked with a surprised voice.

"Thankfully, she can't seem to use it properly yet. She can only turn back her own time or summon herself from different timeline for now."

"Aww, Lord Luciela. I won't get the chance to boast if you keep telling them everything."

"Laying hands on space-time is not just a forbidden act amongst demons, it's forbidden amongst all those who live in this universe! Karis, I'll punish you today in the place of all lifeforms of this universe!!"

"Will that even be possible? Only thing on my mind is how I'll play with Lord Luciela."

Karis seemed to make a seductive moan…… then two Karises appeared beside her. It was 3 versus 3 now. Lu, Ciel and Ignia all exchanged glances then raised their weapons.

Their opponent was a demon who controlled time, even if only just a bit. The fight from before was just Karis playing around. The real fight was about to start.

"Then let's….."

"How intriguing."

Just when Lu was about to make her decision, a voice of admiration came from above. Karis and the Search Party members all looked up to see Add with his eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"That's very intriguing….."

Eve who jumped off from the Dynamos landed lightly on the ground then summoned Oberon and Ophelia at the same time.

"So it's Karis. I'll fight as well."

"…..Small fries are mixing in all of a sudden. Just what is that dragon doing?"

Karis put her hands on her waist then complained. Add came down by lowering Dynamo's altitude then asked after looking curiously at three Karises.

"So they are not copies, but are you from other timelines? But from what I know, same individuals cannot exist at the same time in this universe."

"That's why I can't maintain it for too long. Of course, it's more than enough time to kill all of you."

Karis unexpectedly answered Add's question willingly. This was because everyone who saw her time controlling power was scolding her as if she did something wrong….. But some odd guy who recognized its value was praising it.

"Isn't it burdening even for a short time? How are you maintaining it right now?"

"You must be interested in space-time domain as well….. To put it simply, I'm maintaining it with my enormous mana. Of course, I can't use any big magic while maintaining this, but it's still worth it."

She was easily exposing her weaknesses during this question and answer session.…. The El Search Party that was about to go into battle were astonished by this turn of events but Add ignored their stares and asked again.

"So that means you're the original inhabitant of this universe and there isn't much problem with you multiplying? Even if same person from different universes can't co-exist…. The original existence of this universe multiplying must be treated as mere cell proliferation. The problem is if the universe has a will of its own…."

"Space-time has a will. Although it's not an individual will….. But if you think about how time and space is the universe's core, then saying universe has a will isn't necessarily wrong."

"I see. So why is that forbidden?"

Lu who was listening to the questions and answers sighed.

"……Disturbing time is an immense sin. I need not explain how much disaster someone who bends the past according to their personal desires would bring about."

"So that's why you forbid research on time and space?"

Lu frowned when Add asked with shine in his eyes. Eve spoke with an icy tone.

"Add, I don't think this is the situation to have a friendly chat with the enemy."

"No, we can talk a bit more. I like his attitude."

Karis who was their enemy was saying it was okay for Add to question her some more. She looked quite satisfied with Add's enthusiastic attitude.

Karis had face of a researcher who found a sponsor who recognised the value of her research.

"That means you're separating the past timeline with you from the present…. Is that possible?"

"It's not too difficult if you're powerful as me. The issue is figuring out how to. Even Lord Luciela could do it without much difficulty if she got her powers back. Of course, such a day won't come."

"Why would I do something so foolish?"

Lu glared at Karis and then at Add with a frustrated expression. She couldn't help but to get angry when a Q&A session occurred just when they were getting into the decisive battle.

Of course, Add's priority was his intellectual curiosity so he didn't care about how others looked at him.

"No, what I'm curious about is…. There are three of you but how can you maintain your consciousness? Are you all acting after deciding each one of you as Karis A, B and C?"

"I thought it would be like that too but that's not true. Even though I summoned myselves from the past, our consciousness is unified inside me. There are three Karises but we move as one consciousness of the present's Karis."

"Thus, even if you summon your past…. They won't have individual consciousness. Am I right?"

Karis nodded slowly then looked at Add with a captivating gaze. Her gaze was filled with desire.

"You're not too bad. I didn't think there was a guy like you in the Search Party….How about it? Want to become my slave? Your face is rather nice so it will be nice to adore you."

"You're smarter than I thought as well…. I didn't think there was a demon that I could discuss this topic with."

Karis laughed when Add didn't hide his admiration.

"You'll have to be taught how to obey your master…. But this is amusing. Come to my side."

"…..Add."

A sudden recruitment happened at the end of the Q&A session. El Search Party that were staring in confusion all looked at Add with surprised faces. The original Add would have obviously refused…. But Add right here wasn't originally from their universe.

He was an outsider from a different universe that didn't need to assist the El Search Party in their battles.

Lu, Ciel and Ignia stared nervously at Add when he didn't refuse right away. If Add becomes their enemy right now……

"Add, what are you doing? Keeping your mouth shut won't hide your uselessness."

Add just shrugged when Eve spoke to him coldly.

"My calculations are over. I refuse, demon."

"Is that so?"

Three Karises were about to step forward as if they didn't care…… when the ground suddenly got dyed in purple as their bodies became restrained. They tried to escape but they couldn't.

Add stretched his hand toward Karis then smiled coldly.

"I figured out everything I needed to know. Get lost, demon."

Then a gate opened above Karis' head……and gravity orbs started to fall. Simultaneous activation of Void Field and Stardust Shower, Add was keeping Karis in place with questions so he could calculate the necessary spatial equations for this.

Of course, Karis hadn't let her guard down completely. She was confident in her ability to summon her past selves and she could even use teleport. That's why she could spare a moment talking with Add….

But she couldn't teleport right now!

Sense of dismay showed on Karis' face for the first time.

"How come?! Just what is this!!?"

"Everyone, focus fire!!"

Ignia's eyes gleamed soon as she heard Add's shout then she waved her spear widely. Rain of fire started to fall. Lu and Ciel also held their hands together then started to increase their mana flow. Blue demonic energy started to gather….. then two of their wavelengths started build up as overwhelming energy sprouted up.

Lu and Ciel opened their eyes at the same time then shouted burningly to blow away their enemy.

"Eschaton!!"

Space got torn from their harmonious shout as countless demonic spirits flew out of the gap and flew towards Karis. Getting assaulted by Stardust Shower's gravity orbs, Ignia's rain of fire and Lu and Ciel's Eschaton, Karis covered herself with her arms as she screamed.

"Aaaaaaaaah!!"

"Void Field!!"

Her scream meant that she was still alive! Add opened up another Void Field to be thorough. Even though Karis could control a bit of time…..even if she obtained unimaginable power….!

"There's no one who can surpass me in regards to time!!"

Along with Add's prideful declaration…. Karis' scream subsided. Eve who couldn't join in due to the nature of her abilities frowned while looking forward.

"There's still a life signature."

"…….What?"

Add who was panting opened his eyes widely from shock. They still couldn't finish Karis even though Add, Ignia, Lu and Ciel attacked her all at once?

Ignia held her spear tightly as she glared forwards.

"I'll finish her. That binding move, can you do it one more time?"

"……I'll have to even if I can't."

Add forced himself to smile while hiding the tremor on his left hand with his right hand. This was a decisive battle against demons, there was no time to cry about little feedbacks.

But Eve shook her head as she stood beside Add.

"You already did your part. I'll finish it from here."

"Hmph……."

Add was about to say this much was nothing when Lu looked at where Karis was then sighed.

"You don't have to compete with each other. Looks like it's finished."

"…..Hah, hah."

Karis was pressing down on the ground with both of her hands and panting heavily.

Her beautiful face was covered with blood and her arms and legs were burnt so she couldn't stand up on her own. Karis also knew it was all over if she didn't do anything so she was trying her best to get back up. But one of her legs was missing already.

She wasn't acting this time, she was really in dire straits.

"That's what happens when you lay your hands on time and space, how foolish."

"…..Lord Luciela, you're so beautiful even when your saying something like that."

Karis smiled as if she could recover from this easily but anyone could tell it was all over with a single glance. Ignia took a step forward to end Karis' life when Lu shook her head.

"I'd like to finish her. Please concede, Ignia."

"…..I can't. I'll erase her with my own hands."

Karis looked at the two argue over who gets to take her life then burst out into a quiet laughter.

"Ahahaha, you're treating my life like some object ready to be taken? Do you really think you've beaten me with just this?"

"Acting tough is useless. I already know your abilities because I've fought you in a different universe."

Add had fought Karis momentarily in the other universe's Hamel. That's why he knew Karis utilized teleport and bound her using Void Field. In contrast, this Karis had never fought Add(Time Tracer) so she didn't have any idea about Void Field. She had been overconfident in her ability to control bit of time and that was what led to her downfall.

El Search Party's victory would have been uncertain if they had fought Karis directly.

The match had been determined by the difference in amount of information they held.

Add was still on guard for any final desperate struggle from Karis when Karis laughed frantically.

"You knew my abilities because you are from a different universe? I see, so you're the foreign substance that the dragon talked about. I didn't think you'd really exist."

"……"

Dragon? But Add didn't intend to drag this conversation longer. Add's only reason for talking with Karis before was to prepare for simultaneous activation of Void Field and Stardust Shower. Although he did get some useful information out of it…..

Karis stopped laughing then made a sorrowful expression. She then pulled out some sort of gem from between her breasts. The gem had an ominous glow to it, it was Dark El.

Lu's eyes widened from recognising this.

"Wait, you can't be thinking about….."

"Wait just a bit longer, Lord Luciela. I'll love you in a most brutal way possible."

Karis gave an unpleasant remark then brought the Dark El close to her mouth without any hesitation. Stunned from this unimaginable situation, the El Search Party blankly stared at Karis. Only Ciel reacted to this and shot Karis.

Bullet flew in piercing Karis' shoulder but this didn't stop her from swallowing the Dark El.

Lu was utterly abhorred.

"S-she's seriously insane!"

"That was…. Dark El, right?"

"What happens if she eats it? Will she recover?"

Eve summoned Oberon and Ophelia to prepare for attack when Lu shook her head from side to side.

"Dark El is a crystalized energy. It's not something a lifeform can dare to embody in their body. It's no different from suicide!"

"Ahahahaha, Ahahahaha!!"

Karis staggered as she stood up as if answering to Lu's scream filled shout. Her burnt and mangled body had already recovered. It didn't end there as extraordinary power started to flow out of her body.

White part of Karis' eyes had been dyed black. You could tell she obtained much stronger power than before from how….an enormous amount of mana flowed out of her just from her tightening her fist.

"Perfect! This is the perfect power!! Power that I always wanted!! Now I can shatter anyone that stands in my way, even Scar or original Lord Luciela!! I can destroy the Celestial Realm!!"

"…..Just what is that?"

Ignia clenched her teeth as she asked in disbelief. Ignia was strong enough to gauge her opponent's strength. If Karis from before was still within the range of combatable, this Karis now possessed unimaginable power.

Lu also replied gravely in a wary tone.

"She made the mana in her body explode by using the Dark El. Be careful, Karis right now will be…..at least three times stronger than she was before."

"Why doesn't other demons do this?"

Add questioned level-headedly. As Lu looked back at him, Add spoke while still glaring at Karis.

"There's no way that kind of doping doesn't have any side effects. Other demons would have done it as well without any hesitation if it just gave them power. But judging from your reaction, it must be the first time you saw this as well. What's its weakness?"

"……."

Lu who had been surprised at Add's level-headed analysis explained.

"That Karis won't hold out for long. Dark El she swallowed beats instead of her heart as it greedily sucks in all her mana. No matter how long she lasts….."

"No matter how long she lasts…..?"

They might be able to drag the fight on to make Karis destroy herself. At Add's expectant gaze, Lu spoke clearly as if Karis had committed the most foolish act ever.

"She won't last 100 days."

"……"

Concept of time for demons was too lenient. Eve joined in as if she read Add's thoughts.

"That's more than enough time for Karis to destroy Elrios entirely."

"And that's more than enough time for love confessions. She seems totally obsessed with you. Since she's already out of her mind, wouldn't she stay put quietly for 100 days if you soothed her well?"

Of course, Karis who was now insane wouldn't do that but Add was just following up after what Eve said.

Lu became troubled from watching Karis expulsing her energy for a bit then shook her head disgustedly.

"I don't want to…. I don't want that no matter how benevolent I am."

"I have no intention of handing Lu over to Karis either."

Ciel spoke resolutely. Ignia also glared at Karis with a new-found determination.

"…..And I have to get my revenge. I'll end your life this time for sure Karis!!"

"That name doesn't fit me too well now. Shouldn't I be called something else since I became this powerful? But I like the name I've been using as well…."

Karis licked her lips seductively then made an alluring smile.

"From now on, my name is True Karis!"

"…..That's a horrible naming sense."

"I agree."

Add couldn't resist pointing that out and Eve unexpectedly agreed with him as well. True Karis didn't care about their remarks as she stared at Lu like a dreaming girl. Karis' tenacious, dreamy and obsessive stare bothered Lu and made her wince.

True Karis laughed loudly like a predator facing a frightened prey.

"Ahahahaha!! Just you wait Lord Luciela!! I'll destroy everything starting now then destroy you very last!! I'll destroy this world that you love so much! After that I'll make you sit on a throne surrounded by ruins then ridicule you all I want!!"

Countless magic orbs started to fly towards the Search Party when completely insane True Karis waved her hand. The determined El Search Party all shouted at once.

"Here it comes!!"

"Dodge!"

"Ignia, hit away the magic orbs using rain of fire!!"

Fight with True Karis started with Add giving strategic commands.

Red and blue blades aimed at their foes repeatedly clashed then separated. Elesis wielded her sword best she could but she was getting pushed back slowly.

She was losing.

She had already anticipated this outcome before arriving at the Grand Cavern but she was falling behind after all.

"Is that all you got, Red Haired knight? Come at me more intensely! Stronger!!"

Scar triumphantly swung his sword. You might mistake him for being overzealous just from his words but his attacks were quick and didn't have any unnecessary movements. His attacks were based off brute strength….but Elesis wouldn't be able to dodge the next attack if she tried to lunge in aiming for the openings.

'His strength is phenomenal …..and his defenses are good as well. He's much stronger than before.'

Elesis had prepared for this final battle with Scar by drawing simulations in her head but this was more than she had imagined. She was still holding out somehow but there was a slim chance that she'll win.

She had accepted Add's advice and changed her mind to think about various ways to defeat Scar. But it was all for nothing soon as it turned into a 1 vs 1 fight like this.

Scar frowned displeasingly then withdrew his sword when Elesis only defended carefully.

"Why aren't you coming at me properly, Red Haired Knight?"

"I was thinking that you're stronger than I thought."

"Hmph, and you became weaker than I thought."

Scar scoffed as if he was displeased but a flash of joy passed by his face for a moment. There was no one who wouldn't be happy from having their strength acknowledged by their arch rival.

"I wasn't lazy with my training….. but you became far stronger than I would have ever imagined. I'm honestly not sure if I can win."

"So what will you do? Will you run away?"

Scar glared displeasingly at Elesis then turned his head away for some reason.

"Alright then, get out of here."

"…….Huh?"

What did that mean? Scar wanted to spare his words but explained bluntly when Elesis couldn't understand.

"I left our fight last time. So I'll give you a chance to leave this time. Get out of here before I change my mind. Go back….then come back after you hone your skills more. We'll finish this next time for certain."

"…..You're just going to let me go? Because I'm weaker than you expected?"

"This is your last chance. Become stronger by doing whatever necessary then challenge me again, Red Haired Knight."

Elesis laughed from Scar's words. Scar was their enemy and he was the supreme commander of the demon army that invaded Elrios. She shouldn't be having these thoughts about their enemy. But…..

"I really like how you think, Scar."

"You're the only one that gets to go. Others can't."

"Don't worry. I have no intention of delaying our fight. I would never run away by myself and leave my comrades behind."

Scar frowned from hearing Elesis' answer.

"I honed my strength while gnashing my teeth since that day. I trained countless hours to become stronger. Was this boring fight the result we've been preparing for, Red Haired Knight?"

Scar waved his arm then a large shockwave swept past. Each of his actions were causing tremors in the air. Even a light wave of Scar's fist could annihilate dozens of regular soldiers.

He was literally a walking disaster, demon general that shook the skies with his fighting spirit alone. Only Elesis who was undoubtedly the strongest in Elrios could match him blow to blow until now.

But the result could be seen already. They say you never knew until you actually tried, but Elesis' skills will barely not be enough….. Both Elesis and Scar realized this.

"Are you going to waste all of my efforts I've put into defeating you, this fight we've been longing for, in such a boring manner? Are you going to disappoint me because you're worried about those weaklings? Red Haired Knight?! No, Elesis!!!"

"……."

Elesis sighed from hearing Scar's rage filled howl. Although her opponent was a demon trying to resurrect the demon god and destroy Elrios…… at least his anticipation towards the fight with Elesis was pure.

Although it was an unfit description, Scar was a true warrior.

He was a warrior who could tolerate giving his arch rival a chance to escape so he could settle the score later when they returned stronger.

"Scar, regardless of our species…. If you're a warrior then I'm a warrior as well. I appreciate your generosity and I'm honestly impressed. But not abandoning one's comrades is also what being a warrior is all about."

"Comrades? How stupid. You're choosing a foolish death despite knowing the difference between our strengths."

Scar realized Elesis was determined to not back down so he raised his sword again.

But unlike his resolute face, his next question was still overflowing with regret.

"I'll ask for the last time. Do you have any intention of finishing this fight later?"

"……I'm going to ask just in case but will you stop the demon god resurrection ritual if I back out?"

"Of course not."

"But Elrios will be destroyed if the demon god resurrects. I'm not demanding you stop the destruction…..but don't you think it's strange for me to hone my skills when Elrios is being destroyed?"

She didn't have any intention to run away but even if she did as Scar asked and escaped to fight another day….. Wouldn't there be no time to train since Elrios will be destroyed?

But Scar replied with a tone as if he just heard a strangest question ever.

"If the world is in chaos, isn't that the perfect condition for honing one's skills?"

"….Ah, I understand. That idea is a bit too macho for my taste."

Elesis sighed then gripped her sword with both of her hands.

"I tend to forget these days but I'm a girl too….. I like a peaceful world and have been training all this time to protect that peace. The world falling into chaos is completely against my methods."

"It's fine if you made up your mind. It's regretful but let's finish this here."

Scar spoke in a heavy voice as if he abandoned his regrets then raised up his sword. Elesis also shouted as she gathered her strength. Elesis' sword became surrounded in red light then became gigantic.

According to Elesis' original plan, this secret skill was supposed to be used as a finisher after securing her victory….. But she ended up using it now to cover for her inferiority.

But Elesis didn't let herself feel down as she poured courage into herself.

"Here I come, Sword of Victory!"

"Insignificant trick, I'll shatter it!!"

Elesis ran in against the enemy she couldn't defeat despite knowing she'll lose.

Raven quickly backed out as In's restraining orb flew towards him. Jin was about to swing her serpentine sword at maximum length towards Raven but leaned her body backwards urgently. Rena's arrow grazed by the place where Jin's head was.

But this acrobatic movement made it difficult for Jin to dodge consecutively. Rena was about to shoot her next volley of arrows but backed out displeasingly. In had thrown his restraining orb at Rena.

In was about to throw more orbs at Rena but he backed out as he frowned. Raven was running toward In.

"Tch!"

In quickly gave up his attack then backed out behind Jin. In was in change of ranged support so it was obvious who was advantageous if he fought with Raven at close range. Raven didn't chase further when he noticed Jin was poised to sling her serpentine swords again.

Rena sighed then wiped the sweat off her forehead. In and Jin were also collecting themselves so a mutual ceasefire was established.

"…..There's no end to this. We can't afford to get stalled like this."

If one person was in danger then their teammate covered their back. This dicey confrontation of chasing each other's tails seemed to be endless.

"Got any good ideas, Rena?"

"Well….."

Rena was an all around type that fought by mixing sword and bow skills while Raven was a close combat type. Compared to that, In was a long range attack type while Jin could handle both close and long ranges.

Honestly, Rena and Raven were superior if you considered only their individual skills. This wasn't a boast…. Rena came to this conclusion with cold and level-headed comparison.

But compatibility with their enemy wasn't too good. If In and Jin kept fighting passively from the long range then Rena had to respond with her bow as well….and Raven who could only shine in close combat had no choice but to watch.

Although the situation was at a stalemate, In and Jin must have realized their skills fell behind so they were being cautious with their attacks. It was a situation where one single wrong move could not only endanger one's own life but could endanger their partner's life as well.

And their partners were people precious to them. Both sides couldn't engage in battle carelessly.

Rena was pondering for a solution while drawing a frown on her beautiful face when Raven took a step forward while clenching his fist.

"…..There's no time. We'll have to make a move first."

"Raven!"

What was he thinking? Rena got alarmed and tried to dissuade him but Raven wasn't acting thoughtlessly.

"They just have to stall for time. But we have to break through."

"….."

They were on time limit since they had to stop the demon god resurrection ritual. Not only that, but other members that got separated could be in danger.

Rena was also thinking Raven's method was correct. They had to break through and achieve victory no matter how reckless of a method they used. But she wanted to deny Raven's words in her heart.

Because she wasn't the only one who'll be in danger if this went wrong.

"Rena, other kids might be in danger."

"….But that doesn't mean it's okay for you to be in danger."

Raven smiled vaguely at Rena's scolding voice. It was a smile that this blunt man rarely showed.

"I'm strong."

"….."

Rena was about to shake her head to deny Raven's unreasonable words but he was already moving forward. After collecting his breath, Raven ran straightly towards Jin without any hesitation.

In obviously didn't let this chance slide and tried to throw his restraining orbs….. but Rena fired multiple arrows to distract him.

Rena pressured In without giving him any moment to rest as she hollered towards Raven's back.

"I'll get mad if you get hurt even a little!"

The tight stalemate started to be shaken off balance. This confrontation will decide the victor. Rena had no choice but to believe in Raven's victory as she faced In in front of her.

"……"

Jin coldly swung her serpentine sword at Raven who was charging directly towards her. Raven's fist had too short of a reach compared to her serpentine swords that could adjust their lengths freely.

No matter how skilled Raven was, there was no way Jin could be at a disadvantage……

But Raven was still running towards her without any hesitation despite seeing the serpentine sword coming right for his throat. Confusion flashed by Jin's face when her check was completely ignored. If he isn't trying to commit suicide…..

Sword that flew in aiming for Raven struck its target.

Clank!!

Ring of clashing metal was heard. Raven blocked the serpentine sword flying towards his neck by raising his left arm, his Nasod hand. It was an unexpected obstacle. Nasod hand was too sturdy for the serpentine sword to cut through so the sword got tied around the hand instead.

But the serpentine sword winding violently nearby caused injuries on Raven's neck as blood trickled down and soaked his chest.

But Raven didn't make any sound from the pain as he clenched his fist tightly then focused on the target he was about to blow away.

"……"

Jin only hesitated for a moment then swung her other serpentine sword right away. Raven must be trying to drag this into a contest of strength but Jin was a dual wielder. She just had to finish Raven off with her remaining sword.

Rena couldn't help him since she was tied up from facing In…..

"Haaaaaaaah!"

In that moment, Raven let out a boiling shout. It was an unwavering howl that disregarded the immediate danger approaching him. Jin instinctively sensed danger and quickly tried to escape. But Raven's charge was even faster.

Almost like the tempest about to blow everything away!

"Wild Charge!!!"

"!!"

Jin got shocked and attempted to escape somehow as Raven closed the distance in an instant with unimaginable speed.

Jin had already used all the weapons she had and Raven's charge was just too fast. Her sibling that could cover for her in this crisis….was currently struggling desperately against Rena.

Baaaaam!!

Punch that destroyed anything standing in its way struck Jin's body. Jin's body flew into the air and out of the platform as she spewed out blood.

It was all over.

Jin sensed this as she used the small remaining strength she had to turn her eyes to search for her brother.

In who was in middle of his battle with Rena also noticed the disturbance and was looking at Jin in shock.

"……."

Gazes of the siblings crossed only for a moment. Jin quietly fell towards the bottom without letting out any screams. In was about to shout…..but then Rena ran in with her blade drawing a chilling arc.

In's body also got lifted in the air then flew out of the platform from the large slash and a kick that came after.

"Kugh….."

As In fell, he sent an enraged glare at Rena but resignation dwelled in his face soon after….. He turned his gaze towards the bottom.

To search for his sister that fell before him.

"Phew….."

After the situation was over, Rena withdrew her sword as she collected her breath. In was a quite bothersome foe as well but she was able to finish him off easily once he let down his guard from the shock of seeing Jin fall down first.

"…..and we already heard how you guys fought from Elesis."

In and Jin's combat methods were already known to the El Search Party but In and Jin didn't know how Rena and Raven fought.

Jin wouldn't have fell from trying to finish off Raven right away otherwise.

"……"

Rena let out a long sigh then turned her head around while shooting an angry gaze.

Raven who about to stretch his back received this gaze then winced. His reaction was like a big dog getting scolded by his master.

Rena approached Raven angrily then demanded one-sidedly.

"…….I told you not to get hurt!"

"It was an accident."

"That wasn't an accident…… You did it again thinking it was okay to get hurt, right?!"

Raven kept silent as Rena shouted angrily. The reason they could get out of this stalemate was because Raven had charged in without regarding his safety. But Rena wouldn't have allowed this strategy if she knew about it beforehand.

Rena kept glaring at Raven but then let out a sigh as she shook her head from side to side.

"I kept telling you to stop doing something like this."

"That wasn't it….."

Raven tried to speak but closed his mouth. Rena tore a large chunk of cloth off her outfit's waist decoration. Raven realized what she was trying to do and tried to stop her but it was already too late.

"Stay still."

"……"

Rena wiped Raven's neck with a cloth made from tearing apart her own clothing. The bleeding had been severe….. Raven was covered in blood all the way down to his chest.

Raven finally opened his mouth when Rena quietly and carefully wiped the blood off.

"…..I'll be more careful next time."

"Forget it. I don't even expect you to listen anymore. You always try to fight like that."

Raven didn't have any answer to her feisty response.

After wiping the blood all the way down to his chest…..Rena let out a weak sigh as she spoke sternly.

"……But I will never forgive you if you die. Never."

"Rena."

"You of all people, don't ever die, in front of me……"

Rena's shoulder shook thinly as she spoke in a quiet voice. Raven hesitated for a moment….. then slowly stroked the back of Rena's head. Rena must be having trouble suppressing her surging emotion because her body was shaking thinly. She didn't make any other movements for a while.

Rena used to express her emotions openly in the past. But she never let her emotions out like this ever since she witnessed the tragedy that befell her race.

Maybe he had wished for Rena to show her emotions again like before. Since smiling face suited her better.

Raven blankly thought about this…..but didn't have any idea what he should do right now.

Although crudely, all he could do was hold her until her shivering shoulders calmed down.

Raven's mouth as he gently held Rena opened on its own. Words he didn't prepare were coming from his heart.

"……Rena."

"……"

Raven spoke with the softest voice he could manage, but resolutely as well.

"I'm strong so I won't die. I promise."

"…..I'll believe you."

Rena nodded with a shaky voice then slowly grabbed Raven's hand. Rena sadly stroked Raven's cold steel left arm for a while then slowly stepped back.

Raven wanted to grab the warmth that was leaving his embrace but didn't.

Rena who had her gaze lowered slowly shook her head then raised her gaze. Her face was cold as if her dishevelled voice and emotional moment from before had been an illusion.

"In and Jin has been taken care of. If our information is correct then only problematic demons left are Scar and Karis. The problem is how to escape from here……"

Although Rena and Raven were amongst top fighters in the El Search Party, they didn't have any means to fly. Was there any other way out of here? Two of them were looking around the platform again…. When a dark hole suddenly appeared at the center of the platform.

Two of them immediately poised for battle at the familiar scene.

"It's a dimension gate."

"Nothing's coming out."

According to the usual pattern, demons poured out whenever the dimension gates opened. But nothing came out from this dimension gate. The portal just remained open emitting an ominous aura.

"…..Raven."

"I have the same thought."

Two of them had been together for a long time so they could both come to same conclusion easily. Did this dimension gate appear so two of them could use it?

"The problem is….."

"It's too suspicious."

They had seen many demons utilize the dimension gate, but the El Search Party had never used it before. Of course, Rena and Raven didn't have any experience using it either.

Rena shook her head.

"This is obviously a trap. Why would demons do a favor for us? They went out of their way to separate us so there's no way they would let us join up again so easily."

"That should be normal. But…."

Raven agreed too but couldn't avert his gaze from the dimension gate. Their foes could have deployed more demons or isolate the two of them on this platform. There was no reason for them to open a path…..

"They're provoking us."

"…..How cheap."

Rena and Raven both agreed that they were reluctant but also agreed that there was no other way than this one.

Only way to escape from this place… It was suspicious no matter how you looked at it, but they didn't have any time to waste.

More the two delayed, more their comrades could be in danger. After coming to an agreement, two of them stepped towards the dimension gate.

"…..Wait, since you never know what might happen."

Rena said this then carefully grabbed Raven's right hand. Although hesitating for a bit, she locked her fingers with his so they wouldn't be separated.

"I don't know where this will lead to…. but don't let go."

"Yes, let's go together."

Raven got startled for a bit but nodded and began to walk towards the dimension gate. Path ahead was filled with endless darkness but Raven didn't have any hesitation.

Since he was going together with her.

4. Farewell to Meet Again

Fight with Karis who swallowed the dark El, no, fight with True Karis was escalating into a fierce battle. Fierce battle as in….it was getting worse.

"Hold on tightly!!"

Add hugged Eve then raised the Dynamo's altitude much as possible. A tentacle was chasing them from below!

"Ahahahaha!! Ahahahahaha!!!"

Tentacles pierced out of the ground as if answering to True Karis' command whenever she raised her hand while laughing. Purple tentacles thick as a regular person were indiscriminately attacking anyone in the area.

Add and Eve were evading with Dynamo's flight for now…. So only ones left on the ground were Ignia, Lu and Ciel.

"Haaaaaah!!"

Tentacles weren't able to reach Ignia because of the fire barrier surrounding her. They all burnt away like weeds just from coming near her. Trail of flames followed Ignia's spear with each swing and turned any tentacles they touched into ashes…… But the speed that True Karis summoned the tentacles was faster.

"There won't be an end like this!!"

They could probably take out the tentacles in a large scale if they used Ignia's special skill, rain of fire. But True Karis looked like she could still summon many more tentacles…. And the rain of fire was too powerful so it couldn't be over overused on this platform.

The platform held out last time but there was no guarantee that it will hold out again.

Not only that, but the ground was already unstable due to True Karis summoning tentacles that pierced out of the ground. What would happen if they added Ignia's rain of fire? There was no way the platform will hold.

The problem was… True Karis had wings but Ignia, Lu and Ciel had no means to fly.

True Karis must know this as well because she was continuing to summon the tentacles without considering the platform's condition.

"Ahahaha!! Great!! This power! I can erase everyone with this power! I can obtain everything!!"

"……Didn't she merely become crazy?"

Ignia muttered with a sickened expression. Not only did Karis' appearance change after swallowing the Dark El, her mental condition didn't look stable as well. She was tenaciously attacking the party in an overly joyful manner as if she was drunk.

Looking at True Karis with worm and snake like tentacles squirming behind her…. brought disgust to everyone that was watching.

Lu waved her magic gauntlets to root out the tentacles then performed a leap to land beside Ignia.

"It hasn't been long since her powers went rampant so her mind can't keep up yet. We have to defeat True Karis before she regains her rationality and starts using her powers proficiently!!"

"…..How?"

They obviously wanted to stop True Karis but the situation didn't look good at all. While still glaring at Karis, Lu yelled strongly to call her soul companion.

"Ciel!"

"Is there a way, Lu?"

Ciel who approached by skillfully dodging the attacks of the tentacles asked in a composed manner. He looked like he was used to the chaotic battlefield because he didn't look particularly fazed by all of this.

"There is one way."

Lu spoke resolutely.

"….If what Karis has been saying to me are her true feelings then she won't be able to ignore me. I'll become the bait. Can you follow up after me?"

"That's….."

"I know. I'll obviously be in danger. So come to save me. And defeat that bad demon while at it."

Ciel noticed that Lu had already made up her mind so he answered after a short pause.

"I'll prepare assam tea for tonight's dinner."

"Prepare cookies as well!"

Lu spoke energetically then ran forwards without hesitating. Ignia who had been listening to the conversation stared at Ciel in surprise. Even if Lu was volunteering to become the bait, he was just letting her go alone?

But Ciel merely pulled the trigger calmly to shatter the tentacles trying to wrap around Lu. Ignia who missed the timing to follow after Lu had no choice but to focus on clearing the tentacles immediately around her.

Add frowned as he watched the situation from above. From above, the mayhem True Karis was causing…..felt like looking down at a bucket of squirming worms.

It was sickening to watch the rampaging tentacles fill up the platform.

Anyways, True Karis' attention must be occupied with the group on the surface because she didn't attack Add and Eve that escaped into the air. The problem was, two of them couldn't assist the El Search Party while floating in the air like this.

"Useless, let's go down quickly."

"…..Call me Add."

Eve who was being held in Add's arms snapped harshly.

"Merely watching from here is useless, cowardly and stupid. I'll call you useless-coward-stupid from now on."

"……."

It seems his titles just got increased. Add put strength in his arms in surprise when Eve forcefully tried to shake off Add's arm.

"What are you thinking?"

"Even if useless-coward-stupid might get scared and run, I'm different."

Although she said this, Eve stopped trying to shake Add's arm off. It was because of a worry that tussling on top of this small area on Dynamos from this height could be dangerous.

Worry? Wrong. She was being considerate. Eve should be fine even if she fell from this height but there was no way a normal human like Add would be fine.

After realizing that Eve was worrying for him despite how she was acting tough….. Add quickly came up with an excuse.

"…..I'm thinking of a plan. Stay still."

"Formulate it within 10 seconds."

Add carefully avoided Eve's gaze as she demanded while looking straightly at him. He instinctively managed to escape the scene soon as Karis turned into True Karis and situation turned chaotic…. but this wasn't the most optimal solution.

It was basically abandoning the group on the ground and running away since he could fly. Eve reprimanding him was just.

"…..I need a bit more data on that True Karis."

"We can obtain that while fighting on the ground. Why are you being so hesitant?"

"That's……"

Add closed his mouth because he couldn't answer. Eve stared straightly at the side of Add's face then asked straightforwardly.

"Are you scared, Add?"

"Me? Scared of a mere crazy demon?"

Add became furious for a moment. Of course, you could tell True Karis was strong from a single glance. But there was no reason for Add to be afraid of her. No matter how strong she was, would she be stronger than Elesis? Or D?

He's been in life-threatening fights against overwhelmingly strong foes all this time. There was no reason for him be afraid now.

"Then why are you running away from the battle?"

"Who's running away?! I'm……!"

Add reacted emotionally at the word 'running away' without realizing. That's right, running away. Add ran away to this universe to escape from D. While leaving behind everyone who threw their lives away to stop D.

Eve stared at Add calmly when he unknowingly denied in a furious voice. At her gaze asking 'then why aren't you moving?', Add replied while not being able to quell his emotion.

"I'm not afraid of fighting."

"Then what are you afraid of?"

At the continuing question, Add finally realized what he was afraid of.

Unknown powerful enemy, fighting against a powerful enemy didn't scare him. He wasn't scared of it. Actually, it was just what he wanted. Since he had to train against strong foes to become stronger and defeat D.

What Add was afraid of was…..watching Eve get destroyed again.

"……"

It was seriously a ridiculous story. Add was at a loss for words after examining his own mind. Eve here(Code: Empress) was much stronger than Add(Time Tracer). Rather than protecting her, he was being protected by her instead.

Does it make sense for a cat to suggest to a lion that they shouldn't fight because cat is afraid of lion getting hurt?

It didn't make sense… but Add was still afraid. He knew he could turn it back using time travel in the worst circumstances. But he still couldn't shake off the fear.

As Add kept his feelings suppressed, Eve suddenly changed the topic.

"I'm not particularly interested but was I also in your universe?"

"…..Yes."

"How was she?"

Eve's voice was extremely pompous. Her tone was as if Add didn't need to speak he didn't want to.

A tone as if saying 'I'm not interested but I'll listen if you say it'.

It was such a lax question to ask when their allies were battling below…..

"…..She has a different combat method than you."

"But she's competent, right?"

Was that important? Add's feelings had settled but he was still at a loss for words. But then Eve spoke sharply.

"Add, I don't know what's going on in the universe you were in. I have no idea what D is or what the circumstances in your universe is. I won't be able to truly understand even if you described it to me."

"……That's right."

"But I know that you came here to solve a problem in your universe, and that you're desperate."

Eve continued after pausing for a moment.

"and that there's a reason for you keep touching me."

"What?"

Wait, what's with her choice of words? Add got startled and looked around to see if anyone had heard. (Although it was a needless worry since they were flying).

Eve looked as if she was confused as to why Add was showing such a strange reaction.

"You touched my face and hands."

"That was….."

Add almost retorted but felt like it was a waste of time. As Add stayed frozen, Eve told him calmly.

"I don't know what's making you so afraid, or what you're worried about. But I'll help you in any way I can."

"…..How come?"

Wasn't there no reason for this Eve to be so generous towards him? Eve hesitated for a moment then spoke in a prudish tone.

"Training someone who's useless-stupid and making them competent…..is duty of a queen as well."

"……"

"Anyways, let's go down. We can't delay any longer."

Eve urged after seeing Lu charge into True Karis by herself. Add also clenched his fist then made his decision.

Eve was right. The situation won't get better by him escaping because of his fear.

"Just promise me one thing."

"I already promised I'll kiss you."

"….Not that."

Add suppressed his nervousness from how Eve spoke that word without any restraint as he mentioned his condition.

"Don't do anything dangerous, never."

"It's ten thousand years too early for you to worry about me, useless."

…..Add didn't know if he should glad that his title returned to normal. Add headed towards the surface as he sighed.

It was time to finish this. Either they finished True Karis off….or the El Search Party will get finished.

Dozens of tentacles struck Lu at once as she ran towards True Karis by herself.

But tentacles blocking Lu's path got torn like paper once Lu swung her magic gauntlets without backing down. Tentacles that were trying to suppress Lu as she charged triumphantly…. Suddenly changed their movements.

They didn't assault Lu anymore and moved aside. Lu read their intentions as well and slowed down to a leisurely walk.

She was all alone in middle of enemy territory. Lu wouldn't survive if the tentacles attacked her all at once no matter how strong she was. But Lu walked with a relaxed expression as if she was taking a stroll.

Karis, sitting voluptuously with countless tentacles behind her back, was looking at Lu while smiling joyfully.

As they got closer to a distance where they could converse, Lu stopped her steps then looked up. True Karis looked down at Lu in ecstasy.

"Lord Luciela, you came all the way here to become my slave. I'm so happy."

"I seriously don't understand why you're doing something this foolish….."

Lu let out an honest sigh as she shook her head. Karis was running rampant in joy right now but her life was on a time limit now.

"I wouldn't have chased after you if you admitted defeat and ran away. Of course, that doesn't mean I'll forgive you. I would have chased you down eventually. But stopping the demon god resurrection ritual is more urgent right now. So how come….."

"Why am I going this far?"

"Yes, is Scar holding something over your head?"

True Karis giggled loudly as if she heard something amusing.

"He's so stupid that he would never think about something like that. Lord Luciela, you should know better than me how he's a beast that only relies on his strength. Do you know how much trouble I went through doing everything that required a brain?"

"…..I have no intention of having an idle chat with you."

When Lu frowned and urged for an answer, True Karis stretched her arms then lightly bent her neck towards left then right.

Her ample breasts followed her movements and shook.

"Why did you come alone if you weren't going to chat? You're here to talk with me after all."

"I came to finish you off. From the start….."

Tentacles moving aside so Lu could approach meant Karis ordered them to. Karis wished for this conversation.

Actually, Lu just had to attack Karis without listening. She was in a position where she could easily attack Karis and she did harbor much grudge against Karis.

"Still….. I can at least listen to your final words."

"Because of old times?"

Karis was now lying forward and resting her chin on her hands as she spoke in a mocking tone. Lu closed her eyes then nodded.

"Although you betrayed me and committed unforgivable sins…. You were my subordinate. Although you foolishly destroyed yourself because of your greed for power…. Still…."

"Still what?"

Lu clearly drew the line when True Karis urged in anticipation.

"It's true that there were times we spent together."

"Aww, we still have much more time to be together. You're getting ahead of yourself, Lord Luciela."

True Karis spoke while bobbing her legs scampishly.

"You asked why I chose to fight instead of running away? Of course, not because of any loyalty towards Scar or anything. It's just…."

True Karis frowned.

"It all became boring. What will remain if I ran away with tail between legs? It's better to win in a most wild way possible then destroy everything."

"Even if the result is your demise?"

"That doesn't matter now. Elrios will be destroyed of course and I'll destroy the Celestial Realm as well….. then I'll destroy the Demon Realm next. Even Scar won't be a match for me now."

Lu wasn't particularly surprised from hearing that Karis was going to destroy the demons as well. Karis was a pleasure seeker in the first place….and wouldn't have laid her hands upon space-time if she was sane.

"Of course, you will get to witness all of that from beside me. You'll get a front row seat to watch the destruction of this universe. Be excited, I'll destroy everything then kill you last."

"You say you love me and now you're saying you want to kill me? I already know you lost your mind from the Dark El but I'm still at a loss for words."

"I can't live for much longer now anyways. If that's the case…. I can't die by myself. Lord Luciela, you're going together with me at the very end when everything is over."

True Karis' intent of taking the whole universe down with her since her days were limited was outrageous…. But she had the power to make it come true.

Although she couldn't control her power properly right now, once the time passes and the Dark El in her body stabilized, and if she could use her time controlling abilities again, there will be very few that could stand in her way.

Lu wasn't sure if she could win even with her original powers.

"I see, there are more reasons to end your life now. I'll send you off painlessly as possible."

Just when Lu resolved herself, True Karis laughed then asked out of the blue.

"You left the others behind and came to meet me alone because... you believed I would open a path for you, right?"

"……."

What kind of delusion did she have? But True Karis was blushing like a girl in love. Lu's head felt numb after seeing the terrifying existence that could destroy the world blush.

Lu had somewhat hoped from True Karis' sudden confession and her obsessive attitude that she might let her guard down if she attacked her alone…..but seriously?

Karis was quietly waiting for an answer like an embarrassed girl waiting for an answer after confessing her love.

It was difficult to ignore her….and commence fighting.

"Karis, I……"

"I'm True Karis now."

The moment when True Karis smiled while answering embarrassedly….. All the tentacles that had been staying still suddenly swarmed towards Lu. Lu urgently turned around to wave her magic gauntlets, but her reaction was slightly late.

She defended against 1st wave of attacks but she couldn't keep up her defences after 2nd and 3rd waves.

"Kugh!!"

Lu was completely wrapped up by the tentacles due to endless incoming attacks. Tentacles were tightening their grasp as if they were determined to not let go of her. No matter how much she tried to escape, she couldn't exert her strength properly while being tied and hung up by the tentacles.

As if making an offering to their queen, tentacles brought Lu in front of True Karis.

True Karis pressed her finger on Lu's forehead while smiling.

"You're too soft-hearted Lord Luciela. You let your guard down because you seriously considered my confession."

"I didn't think you'd……"

Lu bit down on her lips in frustration. She never thought Karis would do something so underhanded. No, Karis had always done underhanded things…. But she never imagined Karis would do it in this manner. She had been confident she could retaliate up to certain extent despite being at the center of enemy's lair but she didn't think she'd get captured so easily like this.

As Lu made a frustrated expression, True Karis stroked Lu's cheek as if she was handling her favorite doll.

"Your angry face is so cute. I like Lord Luciela from before but I like this weak and tiny Lord Luciela too. I'm fine with both."

"Stop saying things that you don't actually mean. All you're doing is trying to ridicule me."

"Oh my? But the part about my love for Lord Luciela is true."

True Karis answered tenderly then hugged Lu as if she just obtained a treasure.

Karis hugged Lu tightly with the strength that would have crushed a normal human being, then she spoke with an excited tone.

"Now Lord Luciela, I'll show you everything getting destroyed like I promised. I'll love you as my finest slave."

"…..You wouldn't call that love."

True Karis didn't mind Lu responding in disgust and hugged more tightly. She rubbed Lu's cheek with her hand then stroked her hair as if each and every strand was lovely.

"But only thing that comes into my eyes is Lord Luciela. What else could this be but love?"

"You're already mine, Lord Luciela."

"Your mind has become sick."

"That doesn't matter. Because you're already mine, Lord Luciela. Let's watch…… everything get destroyed with just the two of us."

Karis spoke alluringly as she stroked Lu's lips with her finger. Lu let out a thin sigh then gazed directly at True Karis.

True Karis was looking at Lu blissfully as if she was staring at something dazzling, she was like a child whose gaze had been captivated by the precious toy she finally managed to obtain.

"Karis, even if the world ends I cannot be together with you."

"That's fine. I don't have any intention to listen no matter how much Lord Luciela complains, denies or begs me. Because Lord Luciela is my slave and I'm the master."

"That's not the issue."

Lu calmly and slowly gripped her fist. True Karis was looking at her as if she couldn't comprehend. Lu opened her mouth to teach her.

"One who'll spend the eternity with me has already been decided."

"Ah, if you mean that foolish man, he'll be soon…."

"His name is Ciel, he's my soul companion and the one who I'm together with until the day when the world ends."

True Karis frowned but Lu ignored her as she began to raise her power. Lu could do it, she couldn't defeat True Karis by herself but two of them could do it.

Not alone, but with two!

"I'll teach you what being two but one truly means! Come to me, Ciel!!"

Immediately after Lu's shout…..Ciel appeared beside Lu. True Karis' eyes widened from Ciel's sudden appearance.

Just how? It wasn't a teleport, how can this be…….?

But even before True Karis opened her mouth to ask, Lu and Ciel raised all the power they had and shouted together as if they had planned this beforehand.

"Castle of Abaddon!!!"

Their voices and powers joined as one, everything the two of them possessed formed into a harmony as…..the castle Lu resided in the past, Abaddon was summoned!!

"What!?!"

True Karis got terrified and flew up hastily. Getting directly exposed to Abaddon's attack was dangerous no matter how powerful she had become!

"…..You won't escape from here!"

Clear voice rang out and rain of fire started fall as if it was waiting for the moment when True Karis flew up. True Karis gritted her teeth and tried her best to dodge but there was no way to dodge the heavy downpour of fire.

The reason True Karis fought on the ground despite having the ability to fly was to prevent clashing directly with Ignia's firepower. Ignia couldn't fight properly if she fought on an unstable platform.

But Ignia could attack without restraint once True Karis fled towards the sky!

"Fire Priestesssss!!"

True Karis got surrounded in flames and screamed deplorably as she fell to the ground. Although her wings and various parts of her body were burnt from getting hit directly…. Karis still had the tenacity to survive.

But she couldn't do anything about falling back down towards the platform. And on the ground, Abaddon that finished its attack preparation was waiting!!

"Aaahhhhhhh!!!"

She couldn't dodge now! Abaddon started to pour infinite number of magic spears at True Karis as she screamed in terror.

Blinding blue light disappeared. Ignia withdrew her rain of fire then murmured quickly as she narrowed her eyes.

"….Is it over?"

Movements of the tentacles were gradually slowing down. Their plan of Lu creating an opening then having Ciel join her to attack with all their strength then Ignia shooting True Karis down if she fled to the air seemed to have been successful.

But they couldn't confirm True Karis' death because tentacles were in their way. Add and Eve who had been fighting approached Ignia who wasn't letting her guard down.

"……Looks like the plan worked."

"It's not the time to relax yet, useless."

Ignia nodded to agree then grasped her spear. True Karis was her hated enemy that brought war to Elrios and took the lives of those kids that were precious to her.

She wanted to finish her off personally no matter what.

"I'll go check. You two wait here."

"Wouldn't it be better if we moved together?"

"She might use some kind of large scale magic. It's hard for me to use this if you guys are nearby."

Ignia said this then conjured a wall of fire around her. Ignia's raw power and abilities were impressive but it did seem to lack in discerning allies and foes.

As Ignia went ahead to confirm True Karis' death, Add put his hands into his pockets.

"If Karis is done for…. Only one left is Scar now?"

"It should be."

"….."

Add stole a look at Eve's face from her answer. The fight in Lanox was gradually coming to a close. He even got a promise from Eve for a kiss. Eve who is prideful of her own words won't change her mind so the stage 1 was clear.

Only thing left was to steal Eve's core.

The problem was that the other Search Party members will become his enemies soon as Add assaulted her. It was impossible for him to survive if that happened…. And he somehow didn't want to create such a situation.

Add spoke quietly while following half reason and half emotion.

"Eve….."

"I'm listening so you can speak, useless."

Eve was on alert just in case the tentacles around them started moving again.

"When this fight ends, I have something to say to you alone."

"Alright."

Add had thought of various excuses for the case when Eve asked why they needed to be alone, but she cleanly accepted on the contrary to his expectation. Add was about to ask why she wasn't suspicious of him at all but closed his mouth.

Something he shouldn't say was seeping out of his mouth.

"Just why do you trust me so mu…."

"Add!!"

Add who had been confessing his emotion raised his head due to Eve's short shout.

Giant scythe was sweeping across the ground. Both of them will get caught in its trajectory like this.

And the arm Eve stretched out toward Add was to push him away so he didn't get caught in the scythe's trajectory.

Add grasped the situation in an instant…..then calculated with a surprisingly cool mind.

This Eve was strong after all. Not only did she push Add away from the danger, she was dodging the scythe herself as well. But it wasn't perfect.

Add would be completely unharmed like this…. and Eve will lose an arm. She could also lose her right leg with 0.4 seconds of difference.

Humans would die of shock from this but Eve was a Nasod, she wouldn't die from this much. No matter how much Add's skills lagged behind Eve……even he had a chance against Eve without one arm and leg.

The situation was completely going in his favor. Eve's combat capabilities will drastically decline if he doesn't do anything.

Forget combat, she'll have troubles with daily activities for a while.

"……"

He could easily achieve his goal if he did nothing, if he pretended he didn't notice, if he pretended he was really useless and didn't do anything.

Add bit down hard on his lips. Eve's surprised face, her arm stretched out to secure his safety no matter what.

He couldn't hold back after all.

"Kahahahaha!!"

Dynamos activated soon as Add waved his arm while laughing loudly. Invisible barrier enveloping both Eve and Add was created. The scythe flew in as if it was about to cut through anything that stood in its way…..

Clank!!

But it couldn't pierce through the Dimension Distortion field and got deflected. Add who was getting pushed back smiled joyfully. No matter how large and sharp the scythe was, it couldn't break through the Dimension Distortion field.

Thud!

Add's back hit the ground because he wasn't paying attention behind him. But he smiled satisfyingly as he looked up at the Grand Cavern's ceiling.

"Kukukukuk…… Uwaaahh!"

Add who had been laughing energetically screamed from the sudden weight that crushed him. Then a prissy voice scolding him was heard.

"Don't make a weird sound."

"……ugh."

Eve who had thrown her body had fallen on top of him. Eve was basically lying face down above him and he felt her weight strongly on his chest and stomach.

She was heavy! But…..he didn't want to say it aloud!!

As Add desperately withheld himself from speaking the fact aloud, Eve looked down at him quietly……then spoke with a low voice.

"I not going to thank you for this, Add."

"…..Kukukuk. I don't get what you're saying because I'm useless."

Add replied by forcing a smile to hide his inner struggle. Hearing Add's answer, Eve didn't say anything and turned her gaze away from him. She must be quite embarrassed about what she just said.

Add stopped playing around and closed his mouth. His gaze unknowingly checked Eve's arms, legs and other places to see if she was fine…. He became satisfied after confirming she was unharmed.

"I don't want to see it after all….."

Add knew this was such a stupid thing to do…..but he still didn't want to ignore it. He didn't want to see Eve get destroyed again. Even if he knew it hadn't been a life threatening attack or that ignoring it would have made it easier for him to achieve his goal.

Even so…..he didn't wish for her to be harmed.

"……"

Eve didn't ask for what Add meant. Add didn't have any intention to explain either so he closed his mouth.

Anyways, Add didn't know how long Eve was going to stay on top of him. He wanted to tell her to move because she was heavy but he somehow felt like he shouldn't say that. At least in this situation, saying something like that was a bit…..

It was a moment where he had to hide his pain.

Even her final attack failed. True Karis lay fallen on the ground and panted heavily as she looked forward. Lu was looking down at her with a bitter expression.

"Hah? I don't get why you have a face like that when you've won, Lord Luciela. You should be happier. Your old subordinate who betrayed you is waiting for her death. Isn't this the time when you scold me more sternly and lecture about how I should receive divine punishment?"

"How foolish….."

Lu shook her head with a complicated expression. Not a single drop of blood was flowing from True Karis' severed legs. You could see the cross section with veins and bones…..but how there was no blood made it eerie to look at.

Not only did True Karis lay her hands on time, she ate the Dark El as well…. Her body was in an abnormal condition. Of course, Karis' life force and mana was on the strong side amongst demons so she could somewhat maintain herself in this abnormal state long as she wasn't hurt.

But she received a critical damage from Ignia, Lu and Ciel's attacks. True Karis possessed enough strength to destroy everything in the world, but balance in her body was extremely unstable so it was almost impossible for her to recover once she received this much damage.

No one in the world could restore True Karis to her original state now. Lu asked quietly while sighing.

"Do you have any last words?"

"Please spare me."

"……Don't be ridiculous."

But True Karis smiled desperately as she looked at Lu then begged. It wasn't just her words, she gathered two of her hands together as she pleaded.

"Ah, it hurts, it hurts so much! Lord Luciela I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. I'm regretful for what I did. I betrayed you when you adored me so much! I've always regretted my actions and was searching for a chance to apologize to you. I'm really sorry. I was too foolish."

"….."

Lu closed her mouth tightly. True Karis should know better than anyone that begging like this had absolutely no value and that Lu had no reason to listen to her even if she was truly remorseful.

And True Karis was pleading for her life despite knowing all of this very well.

"……You'll kill me even if I say this. Isn't that right Lord Luciela? You won't forgive me. And that's why I'm begging you to spare me."

"……."

"Lord Luciela, you must kill a subordinate who's begging desperately for her life. Understand?"

True Karis smiled refreshingly as she stared at Lu. With the parts below her knees amputated, She used her hands to slowly crawl closer to Lu.

So that she could reach a little more closer.

"Please spare me, Lord Luciela."

So her words could leave a bit more scar on Lu's heart.

"Please, I'm sorry."

Karis had abandoned her attachment for life the moment when she swallowed the Dark El. The reason she was going out of her way to desperately plead for her life despite this was to leave an incurable wound on Lu's heart.

"You're foolish even in the end….."

The hand True Karis was stretching out yearningly after crawling closer to Lu, she was looking at Lu as if she was dreaming. As if she was staring at a sacred idol, she was disregarding her dying body as she desperately tried to leave her existence in Lu's heart.

Lu slowly raised her arm while watching the hand that True Karis stretched out towards her yearningly. This wasn't something she could stop now. True Karis smiled brightly soon as she noticed Lu had made up her mind.

Because she was certain that she could live on in Lu's heart even if she died.

Bang!

"……..Huh?"

True Karis who had been smiling in satisfaction blinked with a blank expression as if she was taken by surprise. There was an unexpected distraction between the two of their communion……and a hole had been dug in True Karis' forehead.

As True Karis' body fell backwards from the shock, she turned her eyes to seek the culprit. The man she once killed was looking at her composedly.

"You again. Getting in my way even at the end……."

As True Karis fell backwards while glaring at Ciel with sorrow and regret, she made a mysterious smile.

"Still….two of you suit each other."

Thud. True Karis fell after leaving her last words then her body got scattered into dust. Lu watched her disappear quietly then spoke slowly once she heard the footsteps approaching from behind.

"I should have done it."

"That's why I did it."

Ciel standing beside Lu spoke calmly for someone who just exacted vengeance.

"Since two of us are one."

"…..Ciel."

Lu seemed to let out a big sigh then nodded. Refreshingly, as if she had shaken off everything.

"Yes, thank you."

"Don't mention it."

Ciel smiled then lightly petted Lu's head. Lu smiled lightly from Ciel's touch then raised her tightly clenched fist up towards the air.

"Then shall we go punish that Scar?!"

Elesis was wearing out after exchanging hundreds of blows with Scar. In contrast, Scar was still tirelessly launching heavy attacks towards her.

"You'll lose your head soon as you stop moving, Red Haired Knight!!"

"How kind of you to tell me that."

Elesis parried the sword Scar smashed down then backed out while staggering. Elesis had faced countless strong adversaries before but Scar was too much for her to handle after all.

In the first place, Scar was a type that didn't particularly utilize strategies or tricks. Him being revered amongst the demons was because he was literally the strongest amongst them. Scar's followers were types that were attracted to his pure strength.

'……Do I rely on tricks too much?'

Elesis' personal skills were also strong enough to boast about being strongest in Elrios but she was also recognised for her leadership skills of commanding the Red Knights. Not only that, she was also familiar with social skills and politics.

To summarize, Scar reached the position of Demon Realm's strongest with his sword alone while Elesis reached the position of Elrios' strongest with various abilities. Is that why there was such a difference between their capabilities right now?

Elesis shook off the unnecessary thoughts digging into her mind then quickly parried Scar's upper slash.

"All you do is run away!!"

As Scar clicked his tongue displeasingly, Elesis asked while forcing a smile.

"Scar, I'm asking this because I'm just really curious…. But what do you think would have happened if we fought in a large-scale war as commanders of our respective armies?"

"What's the point of your question?"

Despite how it was advantageous for him to press his attack, Scar stopped to converse with Elesis. One could have easily suspected that this was Elesis' trick to buy more time but Scar showed no signs of suspicion.

"I'm just really curious."

"I would have probably lost."

Scar readily acknowledged as if it wasn't a big deal.

Scar was a warrior but wasn't adept at commanding others. No, he just wasn't interested in it. In, Jin and Steel Lava demons followed him because of his terrifying skills and pure personality…. They didn't expect commanding skills from him.

Scar, the supreme captain of the demons lured the El Search Party into a trap then all he did after that was have a 1 vs 1 fight with Elesis.

This current situation was a proof that he wasn't well suited as a commander.

"Although I got nothing to say either after letting my blood get pumped…."

Elesis shook her head while smiling bitterly. Fighting Scar strangely made her joyful and made her heart beat. It was to the point where she got thoughts about wanting this fight to last longer even if she were to lose.

Scar asked suddenly.

"Do you want to rest more?"

"…..I didn't ask this so I could recover my stamina."

Elesis answered before she realized when she actually should have bought more time by saying she wanted to rest longer. She had a feeling that she shouldn't be doing this…..but Scar was coming at her so cleanly that the desire of wanting to answer to his pure fighting spirit was surging up from within her.

"Ah, I shouldn't be like this….."

During her long time as captain of the Red Knights, and as a member of the El Search Party, Elesis had been so busy worrying about various circumstances and other people that she rarely had the chance to prioritize her personal desires. It's been such a long time since she was in this kind of situation where she could purely clash swords without thinking about anything else.

Scar smashed his sword on the ground when Elesis positioned herself. In that moment, Elesis kicked off on the ground with her toe then blazed past Scar with a terrifying speed while slashing his waist.

"I was wondering when you'd use that!!"

Elesis' specialty, Rushing Sword, this skill slashes the enemy while blazing past them, and it doesn't end with just one slash!

As Scar who just got slashed roared, Elesis turned around instantly and slashed again. She'll finish this fight with this skill!

But Scar wasn't attempting to counter even after the second slash. Normally those that witness the Rushing Sword will get flustered from its unfair speed then succumb to it. But Scar should have seen this skill before in their previous fight so why wasn't he responding……?

Elesis thought this as she attempted to pressure even more with Rushing Sword then her eyes widened in shock. Scar was spinning around widely.

Elesis felt a twinge across her skin! Something big was coming….but the problem was that she already lunged her body towards Scar!!

Kwooooooooo!!

Formless shockwave swept over Elesis' body and sent her flying far backwards. She barely covered her body with her arms to avoid critical injury…. But Elesis now knelt on the ground on one knee and couldn't get back up.

It felt like her entire body had just gotten shattered. Her sword was still in her hand but she didn't have the strength to hold it up anymore.

"……I won!"

Overflowing with confidence but slightly disappointed, Scar raised his sword. Although Elesis got struck by a huge blow just now, her body was still intact so she would be able to move again after some time.

But Scar was determined to take her life now. It was a hopeless moment, but Elesis asked cheerfully despite the looming threat of losing her life.

"Were you…. saving that move so you could counter my Rushing Sword?"

"I was beaten by that skill last time. Do you have any last words, Elesis?"

"I don't know…."

Elesis examined the condition of her body but she couldn't move after all. Scar nodded then held up his sword.

"It's over!!"

"……"

It ended in a result she expected after all. Elesis closed her eyes in resignation.

She was already somewhat prepared for this, rather than fear of death…. worries about the other members was more prominent.

Will Big Sister Rena regain her smile? Will Big Brother Raven's body return to normal? How about Aisha recovering her mana? Will Chung meet his father again? Will the day come when Ara turns Ran back to normal? Will the original Add return safely again?

And will Elsword…. be alright?

Clank!!

Elesis' eyes opened widely from the familiar sound of metal.

Red haired boy had jumped in between Elesis and Scar and was meeting Scar's blade with his own. Judging by their size differences, it wouldn't have been strange for the boy to get blown away soon as their blades met, but the boy was holding his ground with pure willpower.

"Hmm?"

Scar must have been surprised as well and let out a voice of admiration. But that only lasted for a moment as Scar started adding strength to his arm and the boy's feet started to slide backwards as a result.

Then the boy shouted urgently.

"Aisha!!"

"I know already! Fire Ball!"

Ball of flame that flew in from behind Elesis struck Scar's body directly. Of course, Scar wouldn't be beaten by this much magic….but the shock at least made him take a step back.

The boy started to pour all his strength into his sword soon as Scar's sword wavered.

"Hwaaaaaah!!"

The boy was the one pushing Scar back this time. Elesis who had been vacantly looking at the boy's back came to her senses from the hand that grabbed her shoulder.

"Are you okay, Big Sister Elesis?"

"How….did you guys get here?"

Elesis turned to look at Aisha and asked numbly unlike herself. She had been prepared for death. This was such a miraculous timing.

Aisha spoke quickly while examining Elsword who was fighting Scar.

"We were fighting the demons and a dimension gate opened once we defeated them all. We entered it and arrived here."

Dimension gate? Didn't Scar want to settle the score with her 1 on 1? Elesis felt suspicion from this but she couldn't afford to stay down like this.

Aisha dissuaded Elesis when she pushed up on the ground to force herself up.

"Big Sister, don't overdo it! Others will arrive too if we hold on like this!"

"I'm not that hurt."

Every joint in her body hurt from Scar's last attack but she could move now since some time had passed. When Elesis spun her arms around as if it was no big deal, Aisha slapped Elesis' back while sulking.

"What are you saying?! It would have been really bad if we arrived even a moment late! Stop being stubborn and just leave all it to me, Blizzard Shower!!"

Aisha seemed to gather her mana then conjured an ice storm aimed at Scar who was in middle of a battle. Scar immediately froze up from the sudden ice storm.

Crack!

But despite clearly being frozen solid….. Scar shattered out of the ice by himself as if it was nothing then continued to swing his sword again.

Aisha's jaws dropped as if she couldn't believe it. He escaped on his own despite his entire body being frozen solid?

"…….Is that really possible?"

"He's strong, right?"

"How come you sound so happy?!!"

Aisha retorted from being taken aback. She always heard that Scar was strong but she never imagined he was this kind of untouchable monster. But the one Elesis was looking at wasn't Scar.

"Not Scar, my little brother."

"….."

Elsword was facing Scar and attacking ferociously without backing out.

Elsword knew he'd be at a disadvantage if their swords clashed directly so he was facing Scar with the strategy of dodging all the attacks he could while parrying anything else. Of course, the difference in their skills was clear….so each exchange of attack and defense left a cut on his hair or light injuries.

But he didn't submit, he wasn't scared, and continued to face Scar with perseverance.

As Elesis proudly stared at her little brother, Aisha sighed then spoke to return Elesis to her senses.

"This isn't the time to be impressed….."

"Yes, that's right. I'm so proud of my little brother but this isn't the time to be admiring him."

Elesis said this as she collected her breath then dashed forward like the gale. Her condition wasn't too good after Scar's attack…. but she could somewhat move for a short while because she rested for a bit.

If you can't win alone……

Scar's eyes noticed an abnormally as he was about launch a downwards smash aiming for Elsword's head. He hastily raised his sword to block Elesis' sideward slash.

Scar's face was filled with discontent.

"Your strength has dropped. You're no match for me now, Red Haired Knight."

"Yes, you're right. I'm no match for you. You must have been honing your skills all by yourself but I was bit busy taking care of other matters….."

Elesis launched multiple sword strikes even while she was speaking. As Scar who blocked the strikes backed out few steps, Elesis checked on her little brother that was standing beside her.

Elsword's face was completely soaked in sweat as he panted heavily.

"H-he's incredibly strong…..!"

"He's stronger than me, right?"

"……Why do you sound so proud of that?!"

Aisha who had been listening to the two talk didn't hide her frustration and shouted. Even while shouting, she fired bunch of lightnings to hold Scar down so he couldn't attack carelessly.

Elsword who had been collecting his breath denied.

"No, no matter how strong that guy is, you're much stronger, Big Sis."

"Oh, my little brother knows how to flatter now?"

Elesis pulled on Elsword's cheek in a friendly manner despite how they were still in middle of a battle. Elsword didn't care and was only silently glaring at Scar.

Scar shook his head after easily withstanding Aisha's lightings.

"This is breaking the mood."

"Yes, I'm a bit sorry, Scar. It's true that I'm slightly lacking in a 1 on 1 fight but it's also true that I want to keep fighting you to the end to settle our score. I'll cleanly admit my wish of wanting to keep fighting you 1 on 1."

Elesis shrugged then gripped her sword.

"But this isn't the time to prioritize my own feelings. What we're currently fighting is war. I'll take you down with the help of my little brother who's stronger than me."

"That brat is stronger than you?"

Scar expressed his discontent by speaking in a tone as if saying 'don't joke with me'. Elesis grinned as she pulled Elsword's head towards her.

"You might mistake him for being weaker than you and me right now, but this guy will become the strongest man in the world. I assure you."

"……Big Sis, it's stifling."

"Hold on for a bit, you should be showing how cool you are right now."

Elsword closed his mouth as if he understood. Scar who had been staring doubtfully at the siblings waved his sword widely.

"How lame. Just come at me all at once!"

"Let's go, Elsword!"

Elesis spoke then started running. Elsword also started running without hesitation. Despite not even discussing beforehand, two siblings attacked side by side after leaving just enough gap between them so they wouldn't get in each others' way.

In this moment, the minds of the siblings were united as one.

If they couldn't win alone…..they just had to fight together.

Let's fight against an adversary stronger than anyone else, together besides a comrade they trust more than anyone else!

"Haah!!"

Elsword jumped up high then smashed his sword down towards Scar's head. This wasn't an attack he should be launching against someone much stronger than him, but Elesis was with him now! Soon as Scar tried to receive Elsword's attack, Elesis dove in deeply and struck with an upwards slash.

It had been a chance to strike down Elsword but Scar couldn't ignore Elesis.

As Scar backed out with a frown, Elesis didn't miss this chance and chased after him. Scar tried to swing his sword to face Elesis coming right at him, but Elsword who just landed spun around exquisitely aiming for his side.

He'll get done in by one if he blocked the other. Scar backed out again as he grunted.

Elesis' skills were only slightly below Scar while the skill gap between Elsword and Scar was far greater. Having more numbers might look advantageous at the first glance, but the fight between Scar and Elesis, the fight where strongest beings between the worlds clashed wasn't something that just anyone could join in. It should have been normal for Elsword to only get in Elesis' way if he tried to help.

But….that wasn't the case.

Elsword's skills might be lacking but his cooperation with Elesis was phenomenal. He was reading Scar's wide attack range and continuously attacking him by precariously jumping in and out of the attack range.

Elesis and Elsword kept exchanging the role of the main attacker and support, pressuring Scar with ceaseless torrent of attacks.

They were strong! Much stronger than fighting Elesis by herself!!

Joy seemed to dwell on Scar's face then he made a large swing with his sword. Elsword who was in middle of running in blocked the slash but got pushed back. However, Elesis ran in using this opening to aim for Scar's arm. It was an attack aiming for the opening created immediately after Scar's attack. Scar backed out to evade much of the attack as he could but couldn't help but to receive a slash wound on his chest.

Drip, Scar didn't mind the blood dripping from his chest and burst out into a broad laughter.

"He's indeed someone worthy of your confidence!"

"Yes, Scar!"

Elesis who blocked Scar's downward slash laughed also in response. Behind Elesis, Elsword who had gotten pushed back was running in with all the strength he had.

Hesitating from trying to block Elsword's sword will cause an opening for Elesis to push in. But Scar couldn't finish Elesis off quickly then face Elsword because Elesis wasn't that easy of an opponent.

He'll be defeated like this. Scar wanted to continue fighting…… but he had to finish this at once!

Elesis was facing blade to blade with Scar, then a caution rose in her face when Scar started to gather energy around him again. The shockwave that incapacitated her from being hit before, that formless attack was about to strike once more.

Elesis quickly pulled back then had a flash of worry for Elsword and turned to look back. Elsword who knew nothing about the shockwave was only bravely charging towards Scar.

"Els……."

"Haaaaah!!"

Scar shouted loudly and unleashed the shockwave…..then Elsword jumped up high as if he was waiting for this moment. Scar who just unleashed all the power he had looked up vacantly.

"Rolling Smash!!"

"……!"

In middle of his high jump, Elsword spun rapidly in mid air as he brought down his sword….to slash widely across Scar's chest. Scar could have blocked Elsword's attack under normal circumstances but he was late this time because he just unleashed the shockwave.

"Ugh!!"

Scar didn't fall even after getting slashed directly but Elesis quickly dashed in and swung her sword.

Slaaash!

Elesis slashed in an exact opposite trajectory Elsword drew with his slash, embedding a X shaped scar on Scar's chest.

Scar who was quietly looking down at his fatal wound laughed.

"I lost, Red Haired Knight."

"….No, I'm the one who lost. I actually wanted to keep fighting you by myself."

Elesis spoke quietly after slowly withdrawing her sword. She had wanted to finish the 1 on 1 fight with Scar, and cleanly accept the result…. But she couldn't once she considered the fate of Elrios. War wasn't something that you fought alone and the fight wasn't the end to everything.

Even while knowing this, she still couldn't hide her regret.

Scar smiled bitterly after seeing Elesis' face.

"I tried to become stronger alone…. and you made others stronger. There is no difference between us."

"Scar."

"Stand proudly, Elesis. You're the victor. Don't look back at the defeated."

Scar scolded Elesis then sighed quietly.

"Still…. I want to fight you once again."

"Me too."

"Kuhaha, if demons can go to the netherworld as well….. then I'll wait for you there. Don't lose to anyone until you fight me again."

Scar said this then looked up at the hole in the air. The hole gathering mana to resurrect the demon god was becoming vague due to Scar's defeat.

Scar made a regretful face for a moment then proudly closed his eyes.

"This is goodbye, Elesis."

"Farewell, Scar."

"Hmph."

Scar gave a dissatisfied, but strangely satisfied scoff then his body slowly crumbled.

Dimension gates opened on all the platforms with Scar's defeat. All members of the El Search Party could regroup at the center of the Grand Cavern thanks to these dimension gates.

Unlike the other platforms they've been fighting on, there was a walkable path leading to somewhere on the center platform.

"It seems we can leave this place using this path."

Ignia concluded after examining the direction the path led to. Everyone nodded with exhausted faces.

"Okay, then let's go back now."

"Is anyone else tired? I'm feeling very weary."

"Then want me to carry you on my back, Lu?"

"I'm bit tired too. I'd like to rest….."

"Hey, Elsword. Don't doze off while standing!"

"Big Sis, wake me up when we get back….."

Add frowned from watching everyone's rowdy chatter.

"We defeated Scar and Karis…..so everything is over now?"

"The fight in Lanox is over at the least. Let's go back and rest, Add- No, useless....."

At Eve retracting her words, Add momentarily looked at Eve as if he was being falsely accused then asked again doubtfully.

"No, is this really it? Is the fight completely over?"

"We stopped the demon god resurrection ritual. Can't you see that the hole above has disappeared?"

Just like Lu said, the giant hole in the air had disappeared without a trace. But Add couldn't accept this situation easily.

Is this it? Really?

"Mr.Add, are you worried about something?

"That's not it……."

It felt surreal. But what should he do now if it was really over? Should he go back with them for now….then wait for the chance to steal Eve's core?

"Come to think of it, useless did say he was going to fight with us until Lanox."

"Do you have to go back now, Add?"

"What?"

Add was becoming startled from Raven's question when Ara spoke very regrettably.

"I'm sad that we won't get to see you again, Mr.Add."

"You just have to be nice to slightly useless Add when he comes back, Ara."

"Oh, really?"

Hey, what do you mean 'Oh, really?'. His return was suddenly being assumed. Add quickly tried to quell the situation but Ara's words were already spreading like wildfire.

"Goodbye, Add. Do your best in your fights on that side."

"You can do it."

"Are you going back, Big Brother Add?"

"Be strong, Mr.Add!"

"Let me praise you for your efforts during our fights together!"

Add had a blank face as everyone started saying their farewells. No…he didn't achieve his goal yet so what kind of atmosphere was this?

As Add quickly tried to correct the situation, Eve spoke as if she just remembered.

"Oh, I promised you, Add."

"What did you promise him?"

Eve dropped the bomb when Aisha asked with a tired voice.

"I promised to give Add a kiss."

"What?"

"What did you say?"

"To Add?"

"Wait a moment….."

Everyone was staring back and forth between Add and Eve in shock. Eve was acting calmly as ever but Add suddenly felt like running away and hiding somewhere.

Everyone's gazes were extremely bothersome right now.

"Wait a moment, Add….."

"What does this mean?"

"How could you ask Eve so blatantly??! You didn't even consider the mood!!"

That was Aisha's furious voice… So mood was the issue here? Add was murmuring internally when Ignia scratched her head.

"Actually, Add asked me to-"

"What? He asked Ignia too?"

"To Ms.Priestess?"

What's wrong with this atmosphere? Why did they have to cut Ignia's words off there and make him the weird one? While Add was still in the middle of being so overwhelmed that he couldn't explain himself, Eve spoke to everyone clearly.

"Be quiet everyone, listen to my explanation first."

After calming everyone down, Eve explained shortly.

"It seems to be a trigger for Add to return to his original universe. So I promised to do it for him."

"…..Eve, is that really okay with you?"

Aisha asked worriedly but Eve had a face as if she was asking 'is there a problem?'.

"It's just a simple membrane contact."

"Umm, you see…..."

"Hmm……"

"That's……"

Aisha, Rena and Elesis hesitated from saying anything more. They seemed to be struggling to figure out a good explanation for Eve.

Eve didn't pay attention to them and turned her gaze back towards Add.

"Then close your eyes, Add."

"Uh….."

"I heard kiss was something you did with your eyes closed."

T, that's what he heard too. But wait, right here? With everyone watching? Add screamed internally but Eve didn't care at all as she grabbed Add's arm tightly.

"U-uh….ah….."

Eve moved closer towards Add as everyone watched. Although a bit late, Add tried to escape but he couldn't beat Eve in terms of physical strength. Everyone was looking very excitedly as if they were watching some kind of drama unfold.

Add wanted to run away….but he couldn't! He unknowingly shut his eyes tightly.

Smooch.

And there was a soft sensation touching the back of his hand. Add carefully opened his eyes when nothing else happened even after waiting for a while.

Eve was holding up and kissing Add's hand.

"……"

What was this? Eve let go of Add's hand then took a step back while Add stood still with an empty expression.

"It's done."

"Hah?"

Eve made a confused face when Add stared at her with a dumbfounded expression. Other Search Party members that had been watching either very excitedly or had been blushing were all in a dumbstruck state.

Eve asked while taking a quick glance around at everyone.

"Isn't it courtesy of humans to kiss the hand of someone who's worthy of your respect?"

"……Ah."

Somebody's sigh was representing how everyone was feeling right now. I see, Eve promised because she had a slightly wrong idea. Add let out a deep sigh from feeling sudden sense of depression.

Eve looked slightly hurt from everyone's reactions.

"Why are you sighing? I surely followed the etiquette correctly. Was I supposed to kiss the other hand?"

"No, that's….."

Add who was replying unknowingly realized that everyone was paying attention to his next words. He suddenly became afraid of what might happen if he chose the wrong words here.

"That was good enough."

"I see, so are you going back now Add?"

But Eve asked quickly even before Add tried to answer Elesis' question.

"You said you had something to say to me after the fight. Should I stay behind for a bit?"

"That's….."

Being alone with Eve was necessary to steal the core. Add was about to nod but then made a doubtful face after looking down at his chest.

There was wriggling…… but no words.

Add shook his head because of a sudden thought that flashed by his head.

"No, it's all done now."

Elsword made a regretful face at this answer.

"I'll miss you, Big Brother Add."

"Do your best on that side too."

Aisha sent a warm encouragement for some reason. She might be unexpectedly kind after all.

"Thank you for everything until now, Add."

Rena's voice was much brighter now as if she had been freed from a burden.

"Then farewell, Add."

Raven requested a handshake and Add accepted. Stuff like this didn't suit Add's personality but this time was an exception.

"You became a bit more competent from being with us, so you won't have any problems when you return, right?"

Add merely nodded at Eve's words because he somehow couldn't face her gaze directly. But Eve seemed satisfied with his response.

"Thank you for your efforts until now, Mr.Add."

"Mr.Add, So you're going back after finding out how to defeat D? That's a wonderful news."

Add was about to answer to Chung's words but winced from hearing Ara speak then turned to look at her. White haired and red eyed Ara sent him a cute wink.

Add was about to say something to Ara when Elesis forcefully grabbed Add's hand then shook it strongly.

"Goodbye Add! Call us anytime if you need our help! We'll jump over barriers between universes or whatever and come to help you!"

"…..It hurts, you monster woman."

"Don't cry over just this much. Become more sturdy!"

Elesis laughed broadly then suddenly hugged Add. As Add became surprised from suddenly being hugged, Elesis quietly whispered into his ear.

"Thanks, I could defeat Scar thanks to your advice."

"……I just blurted some words out of frustration."

"Yes, everything worked out because you got mad at me. Thanks so much."

Elesis strongly patted Add's back with a grin then let him go. Add was muttering while rubbing his aching back when Lu and Ciel gave their farewells together.

"I'm bit saddened by how I'm not in that universe."

"Add could have just missed us. Search to see if we're in that universe. We'll certainly lend you our strengths for your fight."

"……I'll do that if I have time."

Two of them nodded satisfyingly at Add's answer. And Ignia stared quietly at Add for a while then asked him for confirmation.

"You already know what I want to say, right?"

"…..Yes, I promised after all."

How he'll keep the priestesses safe, it wasn't a difficult task once he defeated D.

Elesis shouted energetically when everyone finished their farewells.

"Alright, then let's go back everyone! We have to quickly tell the people of Lanox that they don't have to fear the demons anymore!"

Everyone started taking steps to go back while leaving Add behind. But those steps must have been very difficult to take because everyone walked slowly while turning around to give Add their final words.

"Goodbye, Big Brother Add!"

"Try your best, Add!"

"Don't lose your cool no matter how strong the enemy is."

"Believe in us if we're there as well."

"Ask me to assist you once you return."

"I'll wait for the day when we can fight together again."

"It'll be great if we can see each other again, Mr.Add!"

"Be strong Add! I'm glad I met you!"

"Stop the demons in that universe from committing mistakes!"

"Goodbye, Add. Stay healthy."

But their steps didn't stop as distance between them and Add became further and further. Add stood blankly as if his feet were nailed to the ground and looked at the group's backs as they moved further away. Everyone was walking forward.

Towards the place where they can have their rest, then towards places where they must fight to protect.

Eve walked at the very back of the group that was getting further away. She was walking with strangely slow steps then she took a quick glance backwards. Eve completely stopped her steps with an indescribable expression once she made eye contact with Add who was still standing vacantly.

As if she didn't want to depart.

Ara who couldn't bare to watch any longer approached Eve with quick steps then grabbed her hand tightly. She then turned to look at Add and waved her hand widely.

"……."

Eve was moving further away. Ara was waving her hand. Add didn't know what he should say or what face he should make, so he just vacantly waved his hand.

Just vacantly, until every member of the El Search Party couldn't be seen anymore.

While suppressing the feeling of wanting to be amongst them.

5. Back to the Ending

Left alone in the Grand Cavern. Not a sound could be heard.

Add stood alone amidst the complete silence as he slowly reached inside his jacket. Add placed sleeping Eun on top of his hand then sighed deeply. Eun slowly opened her eyes.

How she rubbed her drowsy eyes with her tiny hands was cute.

"Why do you sigh so deeply, boy? Do you have some kind of worry?"

"……."

Add threw Eun in a fit of rage. Eun performed a somersault in midair then turned into Ara's form.

"You're treating a fox too harshly. I thought my small form was objectively cute."

"You….. Shut up for a second."

"Come to think of it, shouldn't you be chasing after the girl and stealing her heart? Why aren't you hurrying?"

"I told you to shut up."

Eun smiled quietly then only wagged her tail as Add glared at her menacingly. Only moving thing right now was a single white tail, there were no traces of her other tails.

Add pressed on his forehead with his hand then spoke while controlling his rage much as possible.

"You…… you lied to me again."

"What's with the sudden ridiculous accusation?"

"……."

Eun made a face as if she really didn't know anything but Add couldn't be fooled anymore.

"Boy must have developed a hobby of persecuting me for no reason. Be more cool-headed. Why would I lie to you after coming this far? We should be joining our strengths to go back to the original universe and defeat D. So why do you not trust me?"

"Yes, that's normal. That's normal and logical."

Add responded with a dumbstruck sigh as he continued to speak.

"You shouldn't have been lying to me after coming this far. It just can't be possible, not at all. You can't be lying to me after I found out D's identity and crossing together with me to this universe…… especially after the whole situation ended up like this. Logically speaking that is."

That's why after coming to this universe, while Add was startled by the outlandish things Eun had said, he didn't suspect her. Why would she lie now after D's identity was revealed?

Because Eun's goal was solely defeating D…..she would unconditionally cooperate with Add.

That's how it should be logically. That was the human logic…..but this being was a fox. Not just any fox, but a fox with nine tails!!

"Boy seems to be furious at me right now. Then give me a proof. Just what kind of lie did I….."

"About everything!!"

Eun closed her mouth from Add's roar. After cutting Eun off, Add demanded for an answer while trying to be calm much as possible.

"Why didn't you ever ask me for a status update?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"You never asked me for an explanation about what happened so far."

Add sighed then spoke resolutely. There was a strange sense of irregularity. This was an irregularity that anyone could have noticed. The fact was, people usually didn't know about the events that happened outside their presence. That was normal.

But Eun spoke and acted as if she knew everything already.

Even now after parting with the El Search Party, it should be normal for her to ask what happened or where did the others go. But she didn't.

"I never told you what was going on and nor did anyone else. But you had a natural understanding of everything that transpired. Something like that is impossible for regular humans…. No, for regular creatures!"

"……."

"There are only two ways how that's possible! Either you time traveled or can look far ahead into the future!!"

Eun narrowed her eyes then shook her head.

"Boy said it just now. I have the power to look ahead into the future….."

"You said it yourself that seeing the future is disclosing secrets of the universe, that it's not something you can do easily. Don't you remember?"

"……I could have known because I looked ahead despite the losses."

She fell for it. Add pressuring her until now was to make her say this line.

Add sneered while staring at the fox that fell into his trap.

"Is that so? So you had the general idea of what was going on without my explanation because you looked into the future?"

"That's right. You're questioning me as if I'm some kind of criminal."

"There's no reason for me to treat kindly a fox that's not making any sense."

Add spoke sharply then glared.

"You just fell into my trap. If you knew everything because you looked ahead into the future….. then you should have stopped this future from happening."

"……."

"That kiss Eve gave on my hand, I don't know if that will work as a return trigger. But I still haven't found a way to defeat D. No, I did find it. It's the core of Eve from this universe!"

Eun closed her eyes when Add reproached her quietly. It was as if she anticipated which words will come next.

"Then you should have helped me with trying to steal Eve's core. You should have persuaded and forced me to steal it even if I hesitated!! You should have made me succeed no matter what it took!!"

"……Will the excuse that I became sleepy more often not work?"

"You should have known that things will come to this if you looked into the future."

That's right, Eun's words didn't fit with her actions. If Eun really wanted to help Add obtain the power to defeat D and return to the original universe…..then she should have told Add the future she saw and assisted him with his goals.

She should have avoided the outcome of Add parting with the Search Party and being left alone.

"I even said I'll help boy turn back time….."

"You only said it and didn't actually do it. In the end, you did nothing in this universe and only slept while watching my failure."

"You're being too pushy. Girls get troubled by impatient men."

Eun smiled bitterly but Add ignored her. This suspicion had existed since long before. In the first place, if Eun had the power to look into the future, then she should have used it without any restraint to support Add.

How about affection points? Advices related to the kiss? Eun did give those advices but Add ignored them. He could understand Eun's lies regarding those since apparently Add's obsession towards Eve was the key that turned him into D.

But Eun kept her mouth shut regarding the method of obtaining the power to defeat D. She said she didn't know at first and Add assumed she was speaking the truth….. But things didn't fit once you thought about it.

Add needed to obtain Eve's core to defeat D.

If Eun agreed to that, then she should have given various advices so Add could obtain the core. Much more if she had the power to look into the future.

But she didn't do anything.

All she did was say that the method to return was a kiss and that a clue to defeating D was in this universe somewhere. Eun didn't do anything else.

"You aren't going say that we should go back using time travel now, right?"

"…..That will be difficult even for me."

Add glared menacingly at Eun who was smiling bitterly.

Add could ignore many mishaps that happened between him and Eun before, like Eun hiding D's identity or other information she hid.

"So you want to control my actions in the end. You said my obsessions towards Eve turns me in to D and wasn't too fond of my conclusion that Eve's core was the key to defeat D. There is some kind of result, a conclusion that you want and you're trying to force me into it."

"……"

"That's why even though there were many chances you could have helped me or told me the truth, you kept your mouth shut and just watched. Do you remember the dice explanation you told me before?"

Add made a twisted smile.

"The one where you just had to roll until you got the result you wanted. That's what you're doing with me right now. You say you want to help me on the surface but you keep rolling the dice until you get the result you want!!"

Eun didn't answer and only made cynical smile. She was basically acknowledging that Add was right. Add demanded furiously.

"So do I have to time travel again since I don't have a way to defeat D yet? Should I go back and steal Eve's core? Or is this part of your plan too? Are you sure you don't know how to defeat D?"

"Hmm……"

"Have you ever spoken the truth to me even once?! You damned fox!!"

Add was seriously feeling intense hatred towards Eun right now. It was true that he could time travel and got out of many tight spots with Eun's help until now….. But he couldn't throw away the suspicion that even those events were within her calculations.

Eun closed her eyes then replied shorty.

"Truth huh….. I'm not too interested in something like that."

"I don't care about your interests! I'm asking if you've properly told me the truth even once!!"

Eun gave a clean answer to Add's rage filled shout.

"No."

"……"

"There was never a time when I've spoken the truth."

Eun agreed so refreshingly that Add became dumbfounded for a moment. Then murderous intent rose from within him at the same time. It meant she was toying with him all this time. Was she seriously……

But Eun didn't care at all as she spoke clearly.

"Let me say this first, the thing about needing a kiss to go back was a lie. You can just go back without it."

"……."

Even that was a lie?

Blood pumped up to Add's head as he was about to commence attacking. Eun suddenly waved her hand then pulled out a slingshot. Eun held up a white stone then smiled beamingly.

"This stone is the boy."

Eun said this then placed the stone on the slingshot and pulled strongly.

"And this here is this universe."

"……."

Stone went flying off far into the distance when Eun let go of her hand. Eun shrugged.

"And that's the boy returning."

"……An artificial force is being applied just from me staying in this universe? So I can just go back if that force is removed?"

Add couldn't hide his intellectual curiosity even in the middle of his rage. When Eun nodded, Add asked while clenching his fists.

"Just why did you lie to me all this time? I can understand why you hid D's identity. But….."

"Wait a moment."

Add closed his mouth when Eun asked for some time to organize her thoughts. Eun smiled bitterly.

"Boy seems unexpectedly defenseless and emotional but his mind is terrifyingly sharp. He never misses even the slightest flaw or hole in the logic. But it seems he was a little late in realizing it this time."

"……I wasn't thinking properly."

At Eun's confession, Add held his fist tighter while blaming himself.

How Eun always talked smoothly but never took action was a logical hole that he should have realized sooner, no, immediately.

But he had been so caught up with being in another universe and the need to raise affection points……

"I never imagined you were still plotting something…….even after all this."

"……."

Add had at least believed Eun was being truthful after the point when D's identity was revealed. Eun did look remorseful after revealing the fact that Add's obsession towards Eve turned him into D.

He came to believe her. Trust her.

No matter how sly of a fox she was, Add believed that two of them were looking at the same goal and traveling down the same path. After accepting Eun's apology, he developed a trust for her as they spent their time together.

That's why he didn't doubt her.

"…….Go ahead, explain yourself."

Add's voice diminished when Eun didn't talk back. He strangely felt a slight regret once he had thrown up all his emotions.

He didn't know what this feeling was…..but he hoped Eun could give an explanation that he could accept.

"I only have a single goal. To have the boy defeat D and return the universe to its original state. Then…have everything head towards its original direction."

"Do you expect me to believe that after you've given me false information to control my actions all this time?"

"To guide, not control."

That was the same thing. Eun shook her head when Add kept staring at her angrily.

"Boy becoming angry at me is obvious. But I wanted you to realize directly with your own flesh. There's no meaning to the answer that I give you."

Eun narrowed her eyes then asked instead.

"Then let me ask you instead. Why is boy questioning me right now? Shouldn't you be urging me to turn back time and trying to steal the girl's core?"

"……."

"No, stealing it first then asking me for answers later is the proper procedure. But why did you let the girl leave? Didn't you know very well that the girl will stay by herself if you formed your words just right?"

Add bit down on his lips at Eun's question.

"Maybe……"

"Maybe?"

Add swallowed the words he was about to say. It was certainly more efficient to steal first then ask Eun later……. But he didn't want to…..

Unless the situation gave him no choice, he didn't want Eve to……..

Add changed the topic for a moment when it became difficult for him to say it aloud.

"……Why did Add B that was originally here in this universe reveal the fact that he came from the past?"

"He's called Mastermind according to the space-time coordinates."

Add ignored Eun's indication then continued speaking.

"Maybe my methods are fundamentally wrong. I determined that Eve's core was the key that will enable me to time travel, and that it will make me much stronger. But……"

"The part about time travel is somewhat correct. Her core assists the boy's space-time coordinate calculation."

"……That means other methods are wrong."

Add closed his mouth after sighing. Eun was strangely sparing her words in regards to Add who was certain that Eve's core was the key. It was strange come to think of it now.

This wasn't something that could be ignored so easily.

"Then is the key to defeating D the Memory of Time and Space after all and not Eve's core? Can I defeat D if I awaken that? Could it possibly be…….that you know how to awaken it?"

Eun gave a totally off topic response at Add's assault of questions.

"Why did boy protect the girl from True Karis' final attack? The girl's combat capability would have drastically dropped if you ignored."

"……."

"But boy still saved the girl. Why did you block the easy path of achieving your goal?"

Eun asked calmly.

"You wouldn't have made such a choice just because you believed in time travel. Boy is scolding and suspecting me for my ignorance….. But boy also chose the path that didn't align with his goal."

"……."

Add didn't answer. Eun continued her words as if she read his thoughts.

"I'll assume you didn't want to, you didn't want to see it happen. Am I right?"

"……That's right."

Add nodded after long moment of silence. He didn't know what face he should make as he said this so he murmured while looking down at his feet.

His face felt hot for some reason.

"This will sound stupid….. But I didn't want to disturb this universe because of our universe's problem. I didn't care at first, I was determined to do anything to destroy D….."

Eun didn't say anything. Add forced out the words that got caught on his throat.

"…….I didn't want to do it."

"So that's what happened…."

"Don't get me wrong, I know this Eve is different from Eve that I know. Although they aren't completely different…… But I didn't hesitate just because of Eve."

That's right, he hesitated. He hesitated and hesitated…… then gave up and said farewell to the El Search Party once he became suspicious of Eun's actions.

Add closed his eyes then carefully gripped his fist.

"I didn't want to do something like that…… to those guys in this universe…. I….. didn't want to do something like that to the El Search Party."

"……"

"I know, they are different people with only same faces. I think so too but they still had similarities. And those guys wholeheartedly……"

His words were becoming more incoherent. But at the same time, he understood that this was something must say.

"Accepted me. Eve was concerned for me sincerely. And others too…. They worried about my problem as if it was their own. But I was going to……. just to solve the problem in our universe….. steal their….."

A single thin sigh.

"…….I didn't want to steal Eve away from them."

"That's a strange description. Are you saying you didn't want to cause a disturbance to this universe?"

"It's different. I don't care about anyone else. Who cares if this universe is in turmoil or if people I don't know are dying? It's just that….."

Add shook his head then forced himself to continue speaking.

"I didn't want to…… destroy the El Search Party."

El Search Party will all turn into Add's enemies the moment he stole Eve's core. It won't end just there and the El Search Party itself will collapse. Add hadn't known before but the El Search Party members were bound together with emotions they held towards each other, with their relationships.

There were various exchanges of emotions between them. They were an organization being maintained because of their bonds with each other.

If Add stole Eve's core, if he destroyed Eve, then the El Search Party will collapse. They won't be an organization that united and fought by believing in each other anymore, they will be completely shattered.

Once he had this thought….. He couldn't move his hands to act no matter how much he tried…..

Another universe's Add suddenly appeared by bouncing way the original Add. He was someone that would have been natural to suspect. But this El Search Party didn't discriminate or suspect him and instead accepted him as one of their own. They allowed him to spend his time together with them.

While smiling, they gave him words of encouragement, told him that they'll always come running to help if he called, and wished for the day when they'd meet again.

"I didn't want to….."

He didn't want to betray their feelings. This was seriously a soft-hearted, naïve……and ridiculously stupid choice. But this was the result of Add's self-examination.

Hug.

While Add thought, his face was suddenly met with a very soft sensation. Add got extremely surprised as he tried to back out quickly but Eun's hand was pushing down on his head firmly.

Even though he wanted to push Eun away, he didn't know where to touch her. While Add stayed still shivering from frustration, Eun hummed quietly.

"There, good boy. Relax."

"……What are you doing all of a sudden?"

Add realized Eun was holding him tighter the more he struggled so he stopped resisting. Eun giggled as she caressed Add's head.

"Don't men like this kind of stuff? You were quiet when you received this from Rena so I don't get why you're complaining so much when getting it from me. Is it the breasts? Is it the breast size that's lacking after all? Normal men should have been satisfied with this body that's materializing Ara's potential….. It seems boy who already had taste of the super sized heaven cannot be satisfied from a mere large sized heaven."

"…..Get away from me."

"Let's stay like this for a bit."

Eun told Add with a tone as if she was thinking and also with a strangely compassionate tone. It felt different from any pranks she pulled before so Add decided to stay still.

Eun spoke serenely as she slowly caressed Add's head.

"Yes, we finally arrived at this conclusion."

"…..Conclusion?"

"Boy has finally earned the right to fight against D."

Add unknowingly tried to raise his head to look up at Eun's face but it was impossible because her hand was pressing down on him. Not only that, but it was difficult to move because he'll end up rubbing his face against Eun's chest if he tried to struggle.

The fact that he was conscious of all of this was embarrassing. Add just hoped Eun wouldn't find out. He'll be teased because of it forever.

"That's right. Boy's supposition is correct. I even know how to defeat D. But I was worried about what will happen after. What will happen to the boy…..once he destroyed his own future?"

"……."

"The devil is boy's ruined future. There's no rule that another devil won't be born once the devil is defeated."

It was a cold and chilling story. Add tried to demand why she didn't point out this part before. But Eun must have read the timing because she pulled Add's head towards her even stronger. Add couldn't even speak and froze up.

This damned fox…. She was using her body to seal Add's resistance!! Add tried to say all kinds of curses but they only dwelled inside his mouth as he was buried in Eun's chest.

Add barely managed grab Eun's arm then slightly distance his face from her chest. He gasped for air because he was slightly out of breath from being embraced too tightly.

"I thought you'd be furious but you're rather calm. So men forgiving anything no matter how angry they get once they become buried in women's breasts was true after all.

Eun snatched away the timing for Add to deny then spoke simply.

"Didn't I say from the beginning? I only have a single goal. To restore the broken universe to its original state. All lies were means to achieve this goal."

"You were….."

"Yes, how boy sought for the answer, hesitating, wandering, suffering….. They were all necessary steps. According to my thoughts at least."

Eun spoke while gently caressing down along Add's neck.

"Not from me teaching you or telling you what to do. I wanted the boy to figure out the correct answer for himself amidst all the situations he faced. And it looks like the boy has finally found it."

"……"

Seeing that Eun was looking down at him ever so kindly, Add bits his lower lips then pushed Eun away. He was finally freed from Eun's restraint.

Ignoring his internal worry if his face was red, Add asked with calmest voice he could manage.

"So what's that way?"

At Add's question, Eun summoned the wooden board with lattice marks on it that was shown earlier. White stone placed on the center of the board, and another white stone on top of that white stone.

Add knew that this represented Add and D's relationship. As Add stared quietly, Eun cutely put her thumb and index finger together then flicked the bottom stone away.

"Future is coming!"

"……."

What did that mean? But Eun was staring at Add with an extremely glad expression.

"Boy is smart so he must have realized with this."

"Stop speaking nonsense and explain properly. We should now be going back to destroy D……"

"I can't come with you."

Add froze from the words Eun just spoke so lightly. He obviously believed he was going back with Eun for the final confrontation with D, what did this mean?

Add's eyes blankly stared at Eun. Her white hair, red eyes and one tail.

One? Not nine?

"Energy is required to travel across universes. Very enormous amount of energy……"

Add couldn't continue to talk from the chill that traveled down his spine. The slingshot performance Eun showed before, there was an external force pulling the slingshot.

Thus, the source of the force that made it possible for Add to cross into this universe was Eun!

That's why she came with him!!

"Wait a moment, if we can just return……"

"You would have realized everything already, boy."

Eun's reply was short but Add had already realized everything. When he was saying farewell to the El Search Party, Ara's hair was white with red eyes and white tails.

Thus, Eun was residing in this universe's Ara as well and lending her powers. Could it have been some other power and not Eun? But that was unlikely…… since this universe's Eve knew about Eun and naturally conversed with her.

Add was in this universe after bouncing away the original Add that was here before. But what about Eun? If there was Eun already in this universe, then she would have gotten bounced off as well.

But Eun who resided in universe's Ara(Yama Raja) and Eun who was with Add was coexisting in this universe together. This went against Eun's explanation from before.

Trickery. Borrowing Eun's description, cheating.

"Same entities cannot exist in the same universe. But I was pardoned because I'm a fading existence. But it looks like even that pardoned time is about to end. I can't even properly materialize this Ara's potential. See? The outfit is imperfect."

Eun smiled bitterly as she stroked the bare skin on her shoulder. Add clenched his fists from the sensation of his heart being struck with a punch.

"What have you done……"

Unbelievable truth, he never imagined Eun would do something so outrageous like this. But Eun was only looking up at the ceiling without an answer.

Craaaaaaash!!

Grand Cavern's ceiling suddenly shook loudly then collapsed. Then… a giant red beast jumped down amidst the falling rubbles…… Red body, burning yellow eyes, giant wings.

It looked like the incarnation of destruction. It felt like this being had the power to destroy the entire world if it decided to.

Dragon.

"……."

Add's eyes widened in shock. He didn't know where this Dragon came from but it wasn't something they could face by themselves. No matter how strong Eun was, two of them were no match for this giant beast. Only good news was that the dragon was still far away so they still had some time to react.

They'll barely be able to face it with everyone together.

"Let's go back quickly!! We have to fight this thing during the time when the El Search Party is still here….."

"Boy."

Eun spoke heavily.

"Time cannot be turned back anymore."

"……What?"

No, what did she mean? Eun had said multiple times before that they could turn back time if necessary…….

That's right, I lied.

Was being able to time travel a lie too?! Add glared at Eun while a chill ran down his back. How come they can't time travel now after performing it so much before…..?

The last lonely remaining fox tail waved from the wind.

"……You."

Add couldn't speak from the sight of Eun's life literally fading away. Eun should have seen this future but she accepted it without any complaints.

"Boy, everything is at stake in the final battle against D. Give it your best."

"…….What are you saying?"

"This is far as I can come with you."

Eun spoke with a smile. Add felt like he was about to have a stroke from his blood surging up to his head so much.

This damned fox was saying she was going to send Add back by himself while she fights this ruthless dragon alone.

"Don't make me laugh! Do you think I'll accept that? We have to go back together and destroy D!!"

"I'd like to help with that too… but my allowed time is almost up."

Eun smiled as if it was unfortunate then touched her tail. Nine tails had gradually decreased until only one remained.

And Eun's hand passed through that last tail.

Add's eyes widened from seeing the half-transparent tail which looked like it was about to disappear at any moment. He didn't know the exact mechanism…..but his clever mind instantly understood everything.

Add staying in this universe itself was something allowed only because Eun was burning away her life. Eun had literally burnt away her own life to bring Add to this universe.

She didn't become sleepier for no reason.

"Wait! It will all be fine if we go back now!"

"I was fated to disappear the moment I forcefully broke the seal and separated from Ara in the first place. Nothing will change even if we go back now."

Add only blinked vacantly from hearing the ridiculous truth. Words he absolutely couldn't accept were being spoken…..but Eun was only smiling like usual.

This wasn't the attitude of someone who was about to die.

"Alright, this is farewell, boy."

"……Don't joke with me."

Add clenched his fists. He knew what Eun's calculations were but didn't have slightest intention to follow along with it. He just needed to drag Eun back with him no matter what…..then return her to Ara.

If that didn't work, he just had to find a different solution.

Add even traveled across time and universes. There shouldn't be anything that he couldn't accomplish. Extending life of a single damned fox shouldn't be that difficult!!

Add grabbed Eun's shoulders then shouted strongly.

"Did you keep your mouth shut because you saw ahead into this time?!! Don't joke with me!! It sickens me to let you conclude this however you want! I'm not going to let it happen!!"

"You're angrier than I expected."

"Don't you dare think about toying with me all the way till the end!!"

Eun who could look into the future should have known about this outcome. But she didn't make any efforts to change it.

Despite knowing everything, knowing that she'll meet her end.

For Add who decided to jump through time to change something that has already happened, he couldn't accept Eun's values no matter what.

"Isn't Ara precious to you?!! Then you should be thinking about going back no matter what!"

"Boy."

"I'll….."

If she won't listen to him then he'll have force her to return with him. He'll drag her back by the collar. Add was about to generate a space-time wormhole when suddenly, a soft sensation met his lips.

Eun, after closing the distance between them, was pressing her lips against Add's lips.

The moment Add realized this, his body suddenly became paralyzed…… and some object went down his throat.

Eun made a vague smile after pulling her lips back.

"…..It's a payment for going back."

"……."

Add couldn't speak. Add knelt down while grabbing his chest as he desperately tried to say something. The thing that just went down his throat was heating up his body as if he was being burnt alive.

"You, just what did you….."

"I'm sorry, boy. The part where you needed a kiss to go back was a lie but it was not a lie at the same time. Even my lie was a lie."

Just what did she feed him? Some foreign object entered his body then he became paralyzed from the sensation of his entire body was burning up. Never mind his hands and feet, he couldn't even budge his tongue to speak. Eun explained as Add stayed down while shivering.

"Fox orb, it's my essence which gathered the moon's energy for hundreds of years. Powers I use for fighting and looking into the future are all contained inside."

Eun pressed her finger on Add's forehead then shook her head.

"Boy won't be able to move right now. But your body will accept it after some time. Think of it as a farewell gift."

"Wh……."

Even his mouth couldn't move. Eun shook her head as Add shivered in pain from the sensation of his body being burnt alive.

"Fox orb is the source of my life. It's not something I can hand over even if I wanted to. But it's also true that we're both foreign entities in this different universe. It was possible to hand it over because we're in a situation where the differences in entities can be fooled."

"You……"

"Boy has changed so much. He only thought about the girl's core at first, but he started to care for others after experiencing much. He learned to risk his life to fight for others, and became able to feel shame from not doing so."

Eun smiled satisfyingly.

"Heart and will to risk everything to fight for your comrades. I waited long time for the boy to possess this heart. Only then, the true conclusion will be reached."

"……"

"And boy has now finally obtained the right to enter the final fight against D. With the power to see into the future, boy should be able to fight on equal grounds against his own future. I'm just giving what should be given. Don't worry."

"Tha……."

Why was she doing something this stupid? She could have just fought from beside him. Why did she hand over the fox orb that was basically her life?

Judging by her tone, it meant that she was beside him all this time so she could hand over the fox orb, only waiting for this moment.

Eun merely smiled as Add who couldn't speak glared at her hatefully.

"I can't see the future anymore. But I believe that boy will defeat D and restore the broken world to its original state. Boy, just like how you're feeling right now, always cherish the comrades around you."

Eun pleaded with desperate voice.

"No matter how precious the girl is…..don't become a devil, at the least."

Add wanted to spit this thing out and return it to her right now. As Add tried to get up somehow, Eun placed her hands on top of Add's hands.

"Please take good care of Ara."

"You……!"

Eun spoke incomprehensible words towards Add who finally managed to open his mouth.

"If the angel sent you here then the devil has to send you back. Dynamo! Code: Diabolic!!"

Then the Dynamos started changing forms as they spread out and then connected with each other. They started to change into a sphere that imprisoned Add. Add got startled from the feature that even he, the developer of the Dynamos didn't know, but his body still wouldn't move.

Eun smiled as she said her farewell.

"The times we spent together was fun, boy."

Dynamos started vibrating as they began to obstruct Add's view. Add shouted with all his might towards Eun who was turning around without any lingering attachments.

"Who said I agreed to this kind of…..!!!"

The sphere seemed to give off a bright light as Add disappeared along with his cry.

Eun who was momentarily staring at the now empty spot where Add had been with a complicated expression sighed then turned around. Red dragon that landed on the ground was slowly cracking his neck left and right.

Eun leaned her spear on her shoulder then spoke cheerfully.

"It's both first and long time since we've met, Perkisas."

"……Intriguing."

Perkisas' eyes moved to focus on Eun.

"To think there was someone who'd come over from another universe. It should consume enormous amount of energy, why did you come here?"

"There was something I needed to do so I'm here with my life as the payment."

Perkias' eyes narrowed. Even Perkisas had noticed from a single glance that Eun was dying.

This was much duller situation than he had anticipated so disappointment came first.

"Where did your essence go?"

"I gave the orb to the boy and sent him back. There's none left for you."

Perkisas made an astounded expression when Eun answered cynically. Perkisas' facial expression was easy to read despite him being a dragon.

"You gave the Spiritual Beast's essence to a human? There shouldn't be any insect who'd be worthy of it."

"The reason for me coming here in the first place was…..to hand over the orb to the boy."

Perkisas stomped on the ground from being outraged. Ground shook as gale was created and stone debris flew about.

"You came on a suicide trip to hand over your essence to a human? You've gone completely insane!"

"Situation in our universe is a bit complicated. Boy needed an extraordinary power to fight against the king of time and space. That's all there is to it."

"I don't understand! I don't understand at all! Although lesser than me, you're still a Spiritual Beast like me, why did you hand over the essence of your power to someone like that!?"

Greedy dragon roared ferociously. Using the demons then abandoning them was all according to his plans. Opening the dimension gates to let the El Search Party regroup was within his calculations as well.

But the final part went wrong. Perkisas was angry from not being able to obtain the essence for himself, but most of all, he couldn't understand Eun's decision at all.

"You're insane! You're going to die here! How dare someone without even an essence try to confront me? Of course, you didn't stand a chance even with your essence!!"

"Yes, I'm probably no match for you."

Eun nodded readily to agree then fixed her stance. A girl pointing her spear frontwards versus a gigantic dragon that was towering over the girl.

It was a fight with such an obvious outcome but Eun was smiling.

Add asked her to go back with him but that was impossible. Eun had already used up most of her power and life energy to jump into this universe together with Add.

Still, she could hand over the fox orb to Add because they came to this universe together.

Add who obtained a new power will definitely defeat D.

Of course, she could have handed over the fox orb then attempted to return together with Add. But she wouldn't have lasted until they arrived at the original universe.

"Although he may not look it, boy has a very soft-heart. He'll try to turn back time again even if a fox who always tricked and made mockery of him dies in front of his eyes. But him doing so will ruin everything."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"That's why my life must fade away here. Although you wouldn't understand."

Perkisas looked quite discontent from hearing Eun speak refreshingly. But his discontent only lasted for a moment as the dragon moved on to his next order of business.

"Then shall I ask why you committed the sin of disturbing my universe?"

"It's not your universe. It's everyone's universe."

Eun shook her head to deny Perkisas.

"Lifeforms that will defeat you, end all the fighting then reclaim peace also lives here in this universe. Even you who knows no fear is defeated by them and peace finally returns to Elrios."

"You speak as if you can see the future."

Perkisas scoffed at Eun's declaration.

"You say that, but you still haven't realized your own future. How foolish."

"I have no excuse if you evaluate me as such."

Eun smiled bitterly to agree then fixed the grip on her spear.

"But even so….. I absolutely love the story about boy fighting for girl's sake."

"What?"

"Don't you know? A story, that fiction woven by humans and people, life and another life, drawn from culminating hopes of each other."

Eun smiled satisfyingly.

"A story where the boy stands strong and continues to run ahead despite being hurt, failing and repeatedly making mistakes, so that he can save the girl. I love that kind of story so much. I hope this story can end properly and meets proper conclusion."

Eun spoke with all her heart.

"I came running this far for a long time with only that feeling in my heart."

Perkisas raised his body as he prepared his claws to strike. Gigantic dragon positioned himself to stomp down on the tiny fox.

"Giving away your essence, burned to death as an empty shell in a foreign land. What a foolish death."

"But it wasn't a foolish life."

Eun gave a pleasant response then gripped her spear tightly. Perkisas took a deep breath as an enormous blaze started to gather on his mouth.

Flames that could burn away the entire world was waiting in front of Eun's eyes. She'll turn into ashes soon as she confronted it.

"No, it was a satisfying life instead."

But Eun ran forward with all her strength. Even if overwhelming flames came down upon her, even if she was facing an overwhelming enemy, this was for the sake of her desires so she had no regrets.

"Red Demise, I'll be your opponent……!"

Although she couldn't be together with the boy till the end, she believed that he will shatter that broken universe. That's why she could fight without looking back.

"Hahahaha!!"

White fox runs through the flames.

"Ahahahahaha!!!"

Until her life fades away.

Inside metal sphere the Dynamos had created.

Add was blinking vacantly while trapped inside the metal sphere just big enough for one person to sit inside.

"Just what……"

Eun forcedly sent him back. Along with the words saying her life was already over, that her job was done since she handed over the fox orb.

"What, just what……"

Add bit down hard on his lips from the strong aching in his heart.

Rage and dejection was surrounding his entire body so he couldn't accurately determine what he was feeling right now.

"……"

After blinking vacantly for a long time, Add realized he could now move his body a little. There was still aching pain all over his body but it wasn't to the point where he was going to die from it.

Foreign substance. Add's eyes looked down at his hand. He saw the white accessory that Eun placed on top of his hand before she forcedly sent him back.

Hairpin with a white fox ornament.

"…….Ah."

Tears started welling up in his eyes as he numbly looked down at it. Add suppressed this indescribable feeling.

Lamentation and rage passed through his lips.

"You damned fox……."

That fox only told him lies from beginning to the end. She subtly hid the truth despite knowing everything. She had been lying even when he thought he knew the truth.

The fox never showed her true intentions just like a fox would.

She must have known how she'll meet her demise since she could look into the future. But…..she still accepted that fate, and thoroughly concealed her real intentions so that she could hand over her essence to Add.

It wasn't a method Add could accept no matter what.

"You always lied to me, toyed with me…. And now you're going end this however you'd like?"

Add bit his lips in frustration.

"I'll never forgive you. I'm never going to forgive you. Doing whatever you like from start to finish……."

His voice shook.

"Doing whatever you like……"

She died.

"Doing what-……."

She died. Although she was an eyesore and he disliked how she teased him whenever she felt like it…. That damned fox fought side to side with him for a long time. They shared many hardships and surpassed many obstacles together.

That fox gave Add the courage to stand back up when he had given up from despair after realizing D's identity.

He can never see her again.

"Ah….."

Something flowed down along Add's cheek soon as that thought reached his head. Add realized what it was after numbly touching his cheek…… then slowly began to despair soundlessly.

No one could hear his cry amidst the darkness. That's why he could cry much as he wanted.

There was two when they arrived but only one when they returned.

Boy ran, piercing through the darkness after losing even someone who he was together with all this time.

He ran towards the last fight, towards the final battle that will end everything.